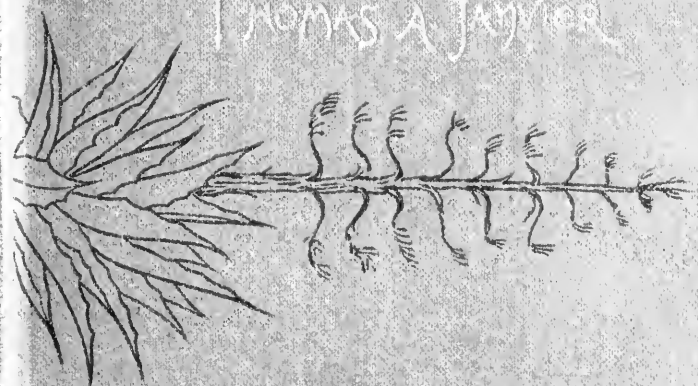


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PANCHIA.

See page 59.



# TORIES OF OLD NEW SPAIN

BY

THOMAS A. JANVIER

AUTHOR OF COLOR STUDIES, THE AZTEC TREASURE-HOUSE,  
THE MEXICAN GUIDE

E los mandamientos de la Justicia, e del derecho son tres. El primero es, que ome biua honestamente, quanto en si. El segundo, que non faga mal, nin dano a otro. El tercero, que de su derecho a cada vno. E aquel que cumple estos mandamientos faze lo que deue a Dios.

ALONZO EL SABIO, *Tercera partida, Titulo II, Ley iii.*



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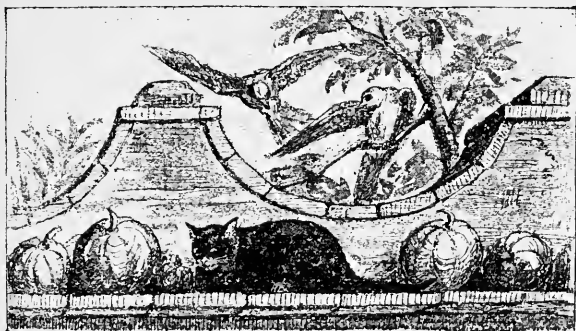


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## SAN ANTONIO OF THE GARDENS.

HE who goes westward from the City of Mexico goes out by the gate of the Tlaxpana, and so along the causeway to Tacuba; the very path over which the Spaniards passed, leaving many killed and of the living nearly all being sore wounded, when they fled from the city that dismal night more than three hundred and fifty years ago.

But this now is a very pleasant path; for on the right and on the left of it are fertile fields and trimly kept gardens, and shading it are many great green trees. And only a little way out upon it is the village of San Antonio, built of gray-brown *adobe* on the level land beside the causeway, and peopled by certain ragged, uncared-for, easy-going descendants of the race that now serves where once it ruled.

The wayfaring stranger who loves a dish of friendly talk with chance acquaintances—and the wayfaring stranger not thus socially disposed will find all lands barren, and will come again to his own land not one

whit the wiser of the world than when he left his home—will rest awhile in this village to chat with whomsoever it may please Heaven to send him to hold converse with. Nor need he fear that Heaven will not provide him with a talking-mate. Let him but seat himself beneath one of the great trees beside the roadway, and presently a stray old man will pause to pass a greeting with him; then a vendor of earthen pots, coming in from some outlying village to the city to sell his wares, will halt his donkey—on whose patient back the great red pots are high heaped up—and will ask in a gentle voice for a light for his corn-husk *cigarito*; an old woman will hobble up and say a friendly word or two; a young woman with a baby in her arms will edge out shyly from a near-by doorway, and so stand modestly aside, but ready to add her contribution to the conversation when it shall become a little more general and when amicable relations with the stranger shall become a little more assured; then another old man or two will join the group, accepting with a grave courtesy the offered *cigarito*; a lazy young fellow with baskets to sell, but with no apparent desire to sell them, will seat himself near; and outside of all will be a light fringe of pernicious ragged little boys. And all of these simple-hearted folk presently will be as frank and as friendly as though they had known their chance acquaintance all their lives.

It will be in such wayside talk as this that the stranger alone will learn—for in books he will look for it in vain—the story of the little church that once stood hereabout; of the very little convent there was adjoining it; of the two Franciscan friars who ministered

in the church, dwelling in the convent, and whose earthly possessions (and these but held in trust from Heaven) were a little garden, and the doves which had built nests in a corner of the convent, and a certain, grave, black cat, and a lame and very lazy ass.

It was all in the far-back time when the Spanish viceroys were the rulers of Mexico; when the fleet sailed once a year from Cadiz westward, and once a year sailed eastward from Vera Cruz laden deep with silver from the mines; when hushed voices still told in horror of great cruelties done by the fierce Chichimecas to frontier adventurers into the region north of Querétaro; and when the good fathers, setting death and torture at defiance that God's work might be done by them, still were busy sending out their holy missions for the saving of heathen souls. The Viceroy in those days was the illustrious Don Antonio Sebastian de Toledo, Marqués de Mancera; who came into the capital of his vice-kingdom and there assumed the duties of his high office in the month of October in the year 1664.

About this time it was that in the convent of San Antonio de Padua—that in a little time came to be known only as San Antonio of the Gardens, because hereabout, then as now, the fertile land was laid out in many little gardens which the Indians tilled—there dwelt the two brothers Antonio and Inocencio. Fray Inocencio was a short and round and plump-cheeked, ruddy little man, and Fray Antonio was very tall and thin and pale. These brothers were vowed to the Rule of St. Francis, and until ordered hither for the cure of Indians' souls the great convent of San Francisco in the

City of Mexico had been their home. A wonderful change it was for them when they came out from that "vast bee-hive of holiness"—as the convent of San Francisco is called by a chronicler of the time—to dwell in a convent whereof they were the only inhabitants, and the extent of which, not counting the tiny sacristy of their tiny church, was just a little refectory, that also was a kitchen, and two cells. Yet had it been the size of a city they scarcely could have been more elated by their translation; for whereas in the great convent they were but two brothers among hundreds, with many above them in degree, here they were everything themselves—free to divide between them the whole range of the conventual offices, from that of Portero up to that of Guardian.

As they stood for the first time alone together in the little garden, the door behind them that opened upon the causeway being closed and barred, and as the knowledge of the absolute power that was theirs in this their kingdom came into their hearts, Fray Inocencio, who was of a lively disposition and very quick to give animated expression to his thoughts, skipped in a most carnal fashion; and still more carnally stood for an appreciable length of time upon one leg while he held the other leg in the air.

Fray Antonio, whose mind was of a graver and more temperate cast, looked upon this exhibition of worldly pride sorrowfully, but not reproachfully. Weakness of the flesh was Fray Inocencio's besetting sin; but he knew his weakness, and when he failed to overcome it he expiated it by penance and sought remission of it in prayer. This was known to Fray Antonio, and so

was his loving, gentle soul the less disposed to manifest by outward sign his inward sorrow when, as now, his brother lapsed from grace.

In the darkness that night Fray Antonio heard the sound of scourging in Fray Inocencio's cell, and in the morning the usually ruddy cheeks of the little round brother were pale and his eyes were dull; but peace rested on him, for he felt that through the sacrifice of the flesh the sin of the flesh had been expiated, and so his spirit was at rest.

When the mass which they celebrated together was ended, and they had come into the refectory to make and to drink their chocolate, he said simply, as he stood beside the fireplace, stirring the chocolate in its earthen pot: "God brings the least deserving of us, brother, into the high places of the earth; but he loves best those who, though thus exalted, still serve him humbly. We have only to seek his aid, and of his strength he will so arm our weakness that we may prevail over the sin that shows itself in carnal pride."

The gentle eyes of Fray Antonio rested lovingly upon Fray Inocencio, and in them shone the light of a comforting and sustaining trust as he answered, "Brother, the grace of God ever is greater than our sins." Nor did the thought at all enter his simple soul—as assuredly it would have entered a soul in which there had been even the very least of worldly guile—that other than a serious meaning could attach to Fray Inocencio's reference to the exaltation of their estate. Thus ever did Fray Antonio help and strengthen Fray Inocencio with a sweet and holy love: and many needs had Fray Inocencio of such comforting, for, the flesh

proverbially being weak in little round and ruddy men, the seasons were sadly short in which he had not some misdeed of his unruly nature to bemoan.

In all seasons a heavy burden rested upon Fray Inocencio's soul because he was so ruddy and so fat. This corporal affliction, sadly unseemly in one vowed to the austerities of the religious life, was of such a nature that abstinence had no effect upon it and for the removal of it even prayer was without avail; so that what little solace his case allowed him was to be got by regarding his fatness as a cross put upon him for his soul's sake, warning him to eat little and so to mortify the flesh that good might come to him in the end. Yet was this a hard cross for Fray Inocencio to bear; for he had a very eager natural love, as strong as it was sinful, for all manner of toothsome things. Especially had he a most passionate fondness for beans which after being well boiled were fried delicately in lard—which dish was not less delicious than it was damnably fattening. Most pathetic was his look of resignation when beans thus cooked were served in the refectory of the great convent of San Francisco, as he resisted their succulent temptation and ate instead the little dry cakes of corn-meal.

In the convent of San Antonio of the Gardens Fray Inocencio was spared the temptation of fried beans, for Fray Antonio, that his brother might not be led into sin, declared that he preferred his beans boiled. And more than this did Fray Antonio do for his brother's comforting. Being himself by nature a most abstemious man, with no liking for food save as a means of sustaining his life and strength in God's service, he de-



liberately set himself to eating in private great quantities of all manner of fattening things; and this he did to the end that by rounding out his own leanness he might make the plumpness of Fray Inocencio easier for him to bear. But beyond throwing into disorder by such unwonted quantities of rich food the functions of his liver, the stuffing that Fray Antonio gave himself produced no results. Therefore, being as yellow as an orange, he gladly gave over his strange discipline. This was wise of him, for the simple truth of the matter was that it pleased God that one of these brothers should be fat and that the other should be thin; and neither of them, howsoever he might strive, the one by eating too little and the other by eating too much, could change that which God had decreed.

Though thus tried in flesh and in spirit, these brothers were very happy in their life in the little convent and in their ministrations of the sacred offices in the little church. In their garden they tilled the earth lovingly, taking great pleasure in its sweet, fresh smell, and in the bounteous return that it yielded them. Fray Inocencio had a rare knowledge of the gardener's craft, and especially had he a relish for growing such vegetables as were good to eat. In this prevarious form of gluttony, as it might be called, he did not deny himself; for, setting a stout guard upon the cravings of his own stomach, he carried on his back the best of all the good things which he grew to the great convent: where the brothers, less scrupulous than himself, ate them all with a prompt avidity. Fray Antonio, though he did his share of work in the kitchen-garden, found his pleasure in the growing of beautiful and sweet-smelling

flowers, which each day he set before the sacred image of the great San Antonio that the little church enshrined. Sometimes Fray Antonio fancied that as he placed upon the altar dedicated to his holy namesake these sweet offerings there shone upon the gentle face of the saint a loving smile. Nor would such miracle have been surprising, for this very image—as the chronicler Vetancurt tells—had raised a dead child to life! In that good time faith was a living principle in the hearts of men, and the blessed saints graciously requited the trust that was placed in them by working many miracles. It is not so in these evil later days.

In the holy work that was set them of saving heathen souls the brothers ever were instant and zealous. Fray Inocencio assailed the devil at all times and in all places with a stout energy that was in keeping with the sturdiness of his body and mind. Indeed, such pictures as this plump little friar drew of the entire devilishness of a very personal devil, and of the blazing horrors of a most real hell, sufficed to scare many an Indian, though through all his life set firmly in the wicked courses of idolatry, into the saving ways of Christian righteousness. Fray Antonio was less successful as an exorciser, but his gentle words and great tenderness of heart and spirit enabled him to make, perhaps, more lasting converts. Through the ministrations of this good brother many a troubled heathen soul was set at rest in Christian holiness, being brought happily to grace through love.

In the first spring-time that the brothers dwelt in the little convent there came to build in a nook of the wall above the garden a pair of doves. These Fray

Inocencio took under his especial care; giving them grain to eat, and placing for them in the garden an earthen vessel full of water wherefrom they could drink—even as the blessed Saint Francis, who called all living creatures his brothers and sisters, cherished the doves which he rescued from the hands of the fowler, and took to dwell with him in the convent at Ravacciano, where was his home. And the doves, recognizing Fray Inocencio's friendliness, soon grew so tame that they would come and eat from his hand and would perch upon his shoulders, and even would nestle in the hood of his blue gown. From year to year they increased in number, and at last there came to be so many of them that the good brother almost would be hidden by the cloud of birds surrounding him. The trust which these little creatures placed in him made him the more earnestly try to stifle a sinful thought that at times would come into his soul—how good they would taste in a pie! Once in his unregenerate youth, before he took upon him the vows of his Order, he had eaten a pie made of doves; and although he never yielded to the temptation that assailed him, the smell and the taste of that pie lingered in his memory and cruelly tormented him to his dying day.

For Fray Antonio dove-pie had no temptations, and the doves were a source of constant pleasure to him, for all of God's creatures he loved. In the quiet of the hot noontime there was a restfulness and friendliness in their sweet cooings that refreshed him as he sat meditating in the dusky coolness of his cell; and he found not less pleasure in listening as they rustled and cooed softly to each other in their nests, after the curi-

ous fashion of these birds, in the watches of the night. But Fray Antonio loved the doves less for themselves than because they were the beautiful creatures of a Creator who did all things well.

A source of constant solicitude to Fray Inocencio in this connection was the possible misconduct of another dependent of the little convent—a certain black cat that Fray Inocencio dearly loved. The official name of this cat was Timoteo; bestowed upon him for the reason that this is a name well-suited to a cat, and also in derisive reprobation of that schismatic Monophysite of Egypt, who in the fifth century usurped the Patriarchate, and was known popularly as “Timothy the Cat.” It was the fancy of Fray Antonio to bestow this name upon the black kitten which wandered one day into the convent, and which, after making a sniffing exploration of the whole of the small establishment, signified his approval of it and of its inhabitants by accepting Fray Inocencio’s offering of milk, and by thereafter settling himself to sleep in a comfortable fold of Fray Inocencio’s blue gown.

Fray Antonio, the friend and intimate of the scholarly Fray Agustin de Vetancurt (who at that very time was writing his chronicle, *El Teatro Americano*, that has given him a world-wide fame), was himself a learned student of the Fathers of the Church; and he explained, at what Fray Inocencio, whose tastes were not scholarly, considered a most unnecessary length, the schism that the false Patriarch known as “Timothy the Cat” upheld, and that the General Council of Chalcedon condemned. Nor did Fray Inocencio, in his heart of hearts, approve of saddling upon a kitten of

obviously amiable qualities and presumably excellent parts the name of a bogus Patriarch, who, according to Fray Antonio's own showing, was an outlaw from the Church, a usurper, and a murderer. Therefore was Fray Inocencio well pleased when the kitten developed a power of purring so thunderously (relatively speaking) that Fray Antonio fell into the way of speaking of him as *Susurro*—which word, in the Spanish tongue, signifies the *Purrer*—and thus himself provided an acceptable substitute for what any self-respecting cat could not but regard as a highly objectionable name.

Of a certainty Fray Inocencio never knew that *Susurro* ate doves; but he had painful suspicions. There were times and seasons when *Susurro* would retire to the roof of the convent as though for the purpose of sunning himself. Yet with such ostentation was this purpose manifested, that not unreasonably doubts as to the purity of his motives and intentions might be entertained. As he would lie basking in the sunshine, his fore-paws tucked comfortably beneath his breast, and his long black tail stretching out straight behind him, Fray Inocencio more than once was pained by observing a swaying of that same tail and a twitching of his black ears, and also a certain look of eagerness that in unguarded moments would come into his half-closed great yellow eyes—all of which seemed to betray the existence in some dark corner of his mind of thoughts the like of which no honest cat should have.

Fray Inocencio sorely was pained by these suggestions on *Susurro*'s part of a tendency toward what, under the circumstances, would be nothing short of mortal sin. In the simplicity of his nature he made

especial prayer to the miracle-working image of San Antonio that Susurro might be given strength to resist the temptation that beset him, and that so the doves might go unharmed. And to Fray Antonio he told that he had made his prayer.

Now in the gentle nature of Fray Antonio there was a strain of kindly whimsicalness—the same that had led him to bestow upon the stranger kitten the name of the Egyptian Patriarch—and this now moved him to take the ease of the cat and the doves into his own hands. Therefore it was that when a convenient season occurred—Fray Inocencio having gone with a back-load of vegetables to the great convent—he sought Susurro in the garden, and found him there, slumbering. Fray Antonio awakened him gently, and although a mild resentment shone in his yellow eyes because his slumbers were cut short, he seated himself gravely upon his haunches, around which his tail was trimly drawn, yawned slowly, and then seriously looked up at Fray Antonio as though awaiting the communication to hear which he had been aroused from sleep. Fray Antonio, leaning a little forward as he sat upon a bench in a shady corner of the garden, looked not less seriously upon Susurro's face and thus addressed him :

“It hath come to my knowledge, Timoteo, whom we call also Susurro, because of thy mighty purr, that the devil hath put into thy heart evil thoughts concerning these friends of ours, the doves. Harken well, therefore, to that which I shall say unto thee ; for as thou heedest it or slightest it so will thy name among cats be honored or condemned. Thy instinct, truly, is to catch doves and to eat them. With this instinct I

will not quarrel, for God hath given it to thee. But God's gifts, O Susurro, may be abused; and a sore abuse of this dove-eating instinct of thine would it be shouldst thou kill and eat these birds which have no fear of thee and which dwell with thee here in thine own home. Rather shouldst thou strive to divert into worthy ways the less worthy of thy natural tendencies, that so, by exalting to good purposes thy baser passions, thou mayst achieve righteousness. Thus did the Holy Cat of Zempoala, whose memory still is revered although the brief term of his earthly life ended more than a century ago. Harken well, Susurro, while I read to thee what my friend the chronicler, Father Vetaneurt, hath written concerning the part which this cat was permitted to take in manifesting God's will that a great and worthy work should be done."

So speaking, Fray Antonio drew from the bosom of his habit a roll of manuscript that he opened out and smoothed upon his knee; while Susurro sunk from his erect posture to one of greater ease, tucked away his paws beneath his breast, and at his spiritual instructor solemnly blinked his golden eyes. Fray Antonio, with a grave emphasis, read to him these words:

It was about the year 1540 that the Reverend Father Friar Francisco de Tembleque felt stirring in his heart a good desire (that, assuredly, God put there) to build an aqueduct by which the towns of Otumba and Zempoala should be supplied abundantly with water wholesome to drink—which at that time the people of these towns were compelled to bring from springs seven leagues away. And his plan was to make an aqueduct over all that distance, carrying it across three wide valleys on no less than one hundred and thirty-six arches,

and making over the deepest of the valleys one arch so great that beneath it might pass (had there been any such thereabouts) a ship under full sail. And to this work the Servant of God—for so Father Tembleque well was called—set himself with a stout heart; and the Indians worked for him joyfully. And at the spot where the great arch was to be, in what then was a tangle of wooded wild land, he built a little chapel to the glory of Our Lady of Belen; and close beside the chapel he made for himself a cell so narrow that scarcely was there room within it for him to lie down to sleep.

And God showed his love for his Servant by giving to dwell with him a gray cat, which every day from the wild woodland round about brought quails for his master's sustenance; and in the season of rabbits, a rabbit. And between the Servant of God and this cat there was much love.

To Father Tembleque there came one day a stranger, who courteously, yet with a curious particularity, questioned him about the progress of the great work that he had in hand. For certain persons of the baser sort had said in the ear of the Viceroy that Father Tembleque was wasting his time and the substance of the Church in striving to do an impossible thing; and this stranger really was an alcalde of the court, whom, that he might know the truth, the Viceroy had sent thus secretly to ask searching questions and to see for himself how the work went on. And as the two communed together, behold the cat came out from the wood to where they stood in talk and laid a rabbit at his master's feet!

When said the Servant of God: "Brother Cat, a guest hath come to us, and therefore is it necessary that thou shalt bring me this day not one rabbit, but two."

Hearing these words, the cat, in due obedience, betook himself once more to the thicket. But the alcalde, thinking that this might be a trick that was put upon him, sent after the cat to spy upon him one of his own



servants. And the servant presently beheld a greater wonder. For in a moment the cat met with another rabbit, which he caught without any resistance at all on the creature's part, and with it returned to his master again: thus plainly showing that all had been disposed thus by God.

And the Señor Alcalde, being so substantially assured of the miracle, returned to the Viceroy and said: "Though it seems to be impossible to bring the water by the way that Father Tembleque hath chosen, and though the work that he hath set himself to do seems to be beyond the power of man to accomplish, yet assuredly will he succeed; for I have seen that which proves beyond a peradventure that God hath vouchsafed to him his all-powerful aid": and he told to the Viceroy the whole of the miracle which through the cat had been wrought. Therefore did the Viceroy encourage Father Tembleque in his great work; and, God's blessing continuing upon it, in seventeen years' time the aqueduct was finished—the very aqueduct through which the water comes to the towns of Otumba and Zempoala at this present day! \*

"And dost thou believe, Susurro," asked Fray Antonio, with a brisk vehemence, "that this Holy Cat of Zempoala would have played the dastard part toward these doves, our home-mates, that possibly thou contempest? Never! Assuredly, never! Therefore lay to thy heart the story of his worthy life, and call upon our

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\* To the still greater glory of the Holy Cat of Zempoala, whose honorable history the chronicler Fray Agustin de Vetancurt has set forth as above in the *Menologio Franciscano*, October 1st, of his *Teatro Mexicano* (City of Mexico, 1698; folio), the fact may be added that the aqueduct of Zempoala still fulfills, in part at least, the useful purpose for which Father Tembleque built it more than three centuries ago.

father St. Francis—who loved all animals and trusted them—to aid thee in setting so strict a guard upon thy sharp teeth, and upon the sharp claws wherewith thy paws are armed, that through the fleshly temptation that is in these members of thine thou fallest not into sin!”

As he spoke these words, Fray Antonio arose from his seat and signified by a gesture of his hand that the sermon was at an end. Whereupon Susurro also arose, but slowly and languidly. In front of him he extended his paws as far as ever they would go, and erecting his hinder parts and bending his fore-shoulders downward he spread out all his claws and dragged backward upon them so that they made little furrows in the earth. Then he drew together his front and his hind feet, and so humped his back in a great bow. After all of which he seated himself upon his haunches, looked straight into Fray Antonio's kindly face, blinked at the good brother his golden eyes, and gave a most prodigious yawn. That these were the outward signs of a spirit meet for repentance Fray Antonio seriously doubted; yet did he stoop down and stroke gently the jowls of the disciple whom he had sought to lead into the way of righteousness; and to this friendly act Susurro responded by breaking at once into the great purring whence came his name.

Fray Inocencio, coming quietly through the church, and standing just within the door of the sacristy that opened upon the garden, had been an unobserved addition to Fray Antonio's congregation: that otherwise had been composed of Susurro, to whom the sermon directly was addressed, and the doves, in whose interest

it was preached. Now, coming forward from the shadow of the doorway into the sunlight, he spoke with grave approval of the edifying nature of the discourse to which he had been privileged to listen, and commended his brother for thus emulating the goodness of their father St. Francis, who had preached to the birds, and of his own blessed namesake, St. Anthony of Padua, who had preached to the fishes—neither of whom, Fray Inocencio declared seriously, saints though they were, could have addressed to Susurro a more moving or a more excellent discourse. Fray Inocencio attributed the obvious confusion into which Fray Antonio was thrown by this commendation, notably marked by a flush of unwonted color in his pale cheeks, to a sudden flying to arms of his modesty upon being surprised in the commission of a good deed.

Fray Antonio found himself beset by reason of his brother's praises by a curious case of conscience, most difficult to deal with. In preaching his sermon to Susurro he had but given play to a certain delicate and quaint fancy that was natural to him; possibly—for so may a man of fine temperament be affected by his surroundings and by the tendencies of the times in which he lives—there was an underlying vein of seriousness in his discourse: certainly there was no thought in it of irreverence. But he knew that it was far from being the grave utterance that Fray Inocencio considered it to be, and for which Fray Inocencio gave him a serious credit that was far from being his due; and he knew also that to try to explain the subtle qualities which composed his mood when—as he now perceived—the devil had instigated him to address Susurro would be

only to confuse with unavailing doubts the simple faith that was in his brother's soul. Therefore, as the smaller of two evils, he accepted silently the undeserved commendation that was bestowed upon him. That night—although Fray Inocencio heard it not, for his slumber was of the substantial sort that is the portion of little fat men whose consciences are at rest—there was a sound of scourging in Fray Antonio's cell.

So far as this was possible in one whose heart was full of love and charity, Fray Inocencio at times envied Fray Antonio because he was superior to the many temptations which made his own life burdensome ; but he knew nothing of the temptations of the spirit which beset his finer-natured companion, and which sometimes, as in this case of yielding to a too whimsical humor—that yet was as much a part of his natural being as of Fray Inocencio's natural being were his stoutness and his ruddy cheeks—begot evil results which caused him heart-bitterness and much distress of soul.

Doubtless, being more sublimate, the pains of conscience which attend upon waywardness of the spirit are more searching than those which attend upon waywardness of the flesh ; yet because of their gross and tangible nature the fleshly sins are more instantly appalling. Thus Fray Inocencio probably would have reasoned, had he possessed a mind disposed toward such abstract considerations, together with a knowledge of the spiritual suffering which Fray Antonio at times endured ; but as neither of these possessions was his, he simply bemoaned very heartily his own frequent lapses from grace. And greatly did he lament one especially great sin, the doing of which came about in this wise :

One day, while Fray Inocencio was gathering lettuces, and while Fray Antonio was tending lovingly his flowers, there came over the top of the garden wall the sound of angry words, and then of heavy blows, and then of a cry that was something like the bray of an ass, and—being a very great cry and terrible—something like the shriek of a giant in pain. With the promptness that was customary with him Fray Inocencio unbarred the door and ran out upon the causeway to see what was the meaning of this commotion; and as beside the door stood a stout staff, that he carried with him for support when he walked to the great convent with a back-load of vegetables, he seized it that he might not affront the danger, if danger there were, unarmed. More deliberately came out also through the doorway Fray Antonio. And very pitiable was the sight that met their eyes.

Upon the ground lay a poor ass, laden with great earthen pots, and the two Indians with him were beating him with their sticks to make him rise, the while shouting at him all manner of coarse abuse. The ass with so agonized a look that a heart of stone would have been melted by it with pity, was crying aloud in pain; for one of his legs—as the brothers saw, though the Indians seemed to perceive it not—had broken under him as he fell beneath his too-heavy load. He was but a small ass, and his lading of pots would have been overheavy for a strong mule.

Then was the wrath of Fray Inocencio so kindled within him that every fiber of his little round person tingled with rage. Forgetting all the teachings of gentleness of the blessed saints, and the example of long-

suffering set him by the good father St. Francis, and his own vow to a life of peace and holiness—forgetting all this, Fray Inocencio in an instant had gathered up and tucked into his girdle the skirts of his blue gown, that he might have the free use of his short stout legs, and most carnally had fallen afoul of the backs and shoulders of those cruel Indians with his staff.

As for the Indians, this visible outbreak of the wrath of God took them so sharply by surprise, while such pain penetrated their brown hides with the blows which Fray Inocencio rained down upon them, that without pausing for thought or consideration they incontinently took to their heels. In an instant they had plunged through the slimy water of the *acéquia* beside the causeway, and were fleeing away across the meadowland beyond as though their assailant had been not a little stout friar, but the devil himself.

Then Fray Inocencio, puffing greatly—for at the best of times he was but a short-winded man—knelt down beside the ass with Fray Antonio and aided him to loose the cords which bound the pots upon its back, and so set it free of its grievous load. Together, very tenderly, they lifted the maimed creature and carried it into the convent garden, and while Fray Inocencio gave it water to drink—and this before he had quenched his own thirst—Fray Antonio, who had a good knowledge of the surgeon's craft, set himself to binding up the broken leg in a splint. And the poor ass, seeming to understand that it was being dealt with by friends who meant well by it, suffered them to do with it what they would.

It was not until their labors were ended—the broken

leg well set, and the ass straitly fastened in a little stall that they made for him that he might not stir the leg in its setting—that Fray Inocencio had time to think of the sin which he had fallen into in giving his righteous anger such unrighteous vent. He was the more distressed in spirit because, for the very life of him, he could not create in his heart a sincere repentance of having given to those Indians so sound a beating. Strive however much he might to crush it, the thought would assert itself that they richly deserved not only every blow that they received, but also the great many more blows which they escaped by running away. And with this thought most persistently came a carnal longing to get at them again and finish the work that he had so vigorously begun. To Fray Inocencio's dying day this sin remained with him; and while the prickings of it were hard to bear, he had of it, at least, the compensating advantage that it always was with him as a wholesome reminder to keep his too-ready anger within due bonds.

Fortunately—for it is to be feared that he could not have resisted it—the temptation to finish the beating was not put in his way. That the Indians returned and carried off their earthen pots was inferred by the brothers when, having ended their surgical and other ministrations to the ass's comfort, they looked out upon the causeway and found that the pots were gone. And they believed that from the Indians came the rather mysterious old man who presented himself the next day at the convent with a confused request for medicine for a sick child; and who contrived, while the apothecary-work was in progress, to get into the garden where the

hurt ass was and to make an examination of its state. But from this old man they could learn nothing of the owners of the ass; nor were their many inquiries among the Indians round about better rewarded. That the owners thus modestly veiled their identity, and that they made no effort to reclaim their property, on the whole was not surprising. No doubt they held, and wisely, that a broken-legged ass was not worth adventuring for within the dangerous range of the little friar's staff.

Chiefly, as Fray Inocencio very firmly believed, because of the many prayers to this end that he addressed to the miracle-working image of San Antonio that was in the little church, the ass in due season got well. But as, through some mischance, the broken bone had gone awry in the splint, it healed crookedly; so that that leg was shorter than the other legs. From this fresh misfortune the ass suffered no pain, but thenceforward he was very lame.

Being thus healed, and, after a fashion, a serviceable ass once more, the question what they should do with him perplexed the brothers sadly. Of other valuable property, being strictly vowed to poverty, they had none. The cat Timoteo, called Susurro, and the doves, were wild things of nature; of no use to man save in so far as they were a source of happiness through the love in them and for them that God inspired. But the case of the ass, an animal both useful and valuable, was different. Fray Inocencio, into whose heart the devil put the thought that the ass very well might bear to the great convent the loads which he himself was wont to carry thither on his back, reasoned that, inas-



much as the ass in truth was not their own, but only in their ward until his rightful owners should be found, they might use him in all conscionable work without falling into sin. But Fray Antonio, seeing more clearly, pointed out that they had striven earnestly but vainly to find the ass's owner, and that now there was small chance that the owner ever would be found at all; and he showed, farther, that no matter in whom might vest his actual ownership, to them would belong, should they elect to avail themselves of it, his usufruct; which possession was a thing of value inconsistent with the poverty to which they were vowed. Yet, since the ass was not truly their own, he admitted, they had no right to sell him and to give the money to the poor—supposing the somewhat improbable case of any one being found willing to buy an ass that in addition to great natural laziness was hopelessly lame; nor were they free to give him away. Giving him in trust, to be surrendered should his owner ever be found, was the only solution of the matter they could arrive at; and this failed because they could find no one who would accept the ass on these, or, indeed, on any other terms. Yet to support the ass in absolute idleness, as Fray Antonio was forced to own, would be to violate the law of his being under which a beneficent Creator had placed him in the world for the good of man.

Altogether this case of conscience was so nice a one, and so beset by difficulties, that after the brothers had debated it for a long while together fruitlessly, and had prayed for guidance without receiving light upon their path in answer to their prayer, they determined to relegate its decision, through Fray Agustin de Vetancurt

—to whom, their little church being adjunct to the parish church of San José in San Francisco, they were directly responsible—to the Very Reverend Father Friar Juan Gutierrez, who then governed the province of the Santo Evangelio, to which their convent pertained, and who was the Senior Provincial of the Franciscan Order in New Spain.

This high resolve they executed. Driving before them the cause of their spiritual tribulation, and accommodating their steps to the halting slowness of his gait, and even stopping when he turned aside to crop in a meditative fashion at some especially tempting bunch of grass, they went together along the causeway, past the church of San Cosme, the convent of San Diego, the burning-place of the Inquisition, and the Alameda, and so through the outskirts of the city to the great convent. They entered by the gate from the Zuleta, and fastened the ass in the court-yard beneath the windows of the building set apart for the use of the commissioners-general of the Order—the same building that now profanely has been changed into a hotel.

There was not a little merriment among the brothers when the purpose for which Fray Antonio and Fray Inocencio had come thither with the ass was known; for already the brothers within this convent, being grown rich and lustful of earthly pleasures, had so fallen from grace that conscientious scruples in regard to the ownership of a lame, wretched ass seemed to them laughable. But the Father Vetancurt, who was a holy man, and who had chosen Fray Antonio and Fray Inocencio for the missionary work that they had in charge because in the midst of much that was evil

and corrupt they had remained pure, treated with a due seriousness the case of conscience that they had come to have resolved. That he smiled a little as he exhibited the matter to the Father Provincial is true; and this great dignitary smiled also on hearing what a quaint cause of perplexity beset the souls of the two brothers and had been brought by them, in their rare simplicity, to him for resolution and adjustment. But the smiles of these two good men had in them nothing of derision, and, in truth, were not far removed from tears.

“It is the spirit of our father St. Francis alive again,” said the Provincial, reverently; and in all humility they thanked God that innocency so excellent should be found remaining pure amid so much of earthly corruption and spiritual guile.

Then came the brothers before the Father Provincial, and by his grace told him the whole of the matter that filled with anxious doubts their souls. Fray Antonio, who feared nothing but evil and the doing thereof, said what he had to say reverently, as became him in such a case, yet plainly and at his ease: telling how the ass came into their possession, yet touching but lightly upon the fiery part that Fray Inocencio had played; how they had sought earnestly but had failed to find his lawful owner, and therefore had no right either to sell him or to give him away; how no one could be found willing to accept him as a trust; and how, being thus forced to keep him themselves, they feared that the use of him was a valuable possession that their vow of poverty forbade. Fray Inocencio, who was terribly frightened at speaking to so great a personage, grew

pale and stumbled in his speech ; but by God's help he told truly how he had beaten those cruel Indians ; how his repentance of this act was not complete, since he could not banish from his heart the wish to finish the punishment that he had begun ; and how the devil had put into his heart the desire to keep the ass, that in bringing vegetables to the great convent his own back might be spared. Having thus said to the end what he felt it to be his duty to say, he drew a long breath, wiped with the sleeve of his gown the beads of sweat from his forehead, and was still. That the ease might be complete, the Father Provincial looked from the window and saw the ass tethered in the court below, and the brothers pointed to his crooked leg and told how in its healing the bone had gone awry ; and the ass, hearing the voices of his friends, looked up toward them with affection and brayed a mighty bray.

With a full heart answered to them the Father Provincial : " It is God himself, my brothers, who hath given this ass to you in reward for your tenderness and goodness of heart, and to accept a gift from him surely is no infraction of your vow. Go in peace to your convent again, and keep for your service this poor beast that you have saved from a life of misery, and in whose brute heart I perceive that there is for you such well-deserved love. Take you also my blessing—though, in truth, rather should I ask your blessing than thus give you mine."

And the brothers, very grateful for the dispensation in their favor, but not at all understanding the full meaning of the Father Provincial's words, made proper reverence to him and went their way homeward ; being

full of happiness because of the glad consciousness, untroubled by doubt or misgiving, that the ass now really was their very own.

Thereafter so often as it was necessary that vegetables should be brought from the little convent to the great one the bearer of the load was the lame ass, and behind him or beside him Fray Inocencio walked. As they slowly journeyed, these two held pleasant converse together; for Fray Inocencio maintained that the ass understood the meaning of human speech as well as he himself understood the meaning of the glances which the ass gave him, and the various twitchings of his seraggy tail, and the shakings of his head, and, above all, the whole vocabulary that was in the waggings of his ample ears.

It was, indeed, a cheery sight to see these friends upon the road together. At his best the ass hobbled along at a pace that a tortoise would have scorned for its slowness; and at times he would stop wholly and would gaze around him with a look of thoughtful inquiry; or he would step aside to crop a bit of grass that pleased his fancy; and ever and anon he would edge up to his friend and rub his long nose gently against the friar's side, and then would look into his face with a glance so movingly tender that nothing more could have been added to it for the expression of his love. For his part, Fray Inocencio patiently accommodated the naturally brisk movements of his own stout little legs to the ass's infinite slowness: when the ass would stop, he would stop also; when by any chance the ass missed sight of a choice bunch of grass, he would lead him to it and would wait by him until he had

cropped it to the very last blade ; and when the ass by his nose-rubbings would manifest his love, he would gather the ass's long, shaggy head in his arms against his breast and would lavish upon him all manner of terms of endearment as he stroked gently his fuzzy ears.

So the fame of these two went through all the city ; and upon the ass, who truly was as lazy as he was lame, the common people bestowed the name of Flojo, which word, in the Spanish tongue, signifies "the lazy one." In this wise came the proverb that is spoken of any one who greatly loves a useless beast or person : he loves him as Fray Inocencio loved Flojo, the lame ass.

Over the brothers, dwelling peacefully in their little convent, and serving God by loving his creatures and by ministering faithfully to the welfare of the souls of their fellow-men, the years drifted happily. Unharmmed by Timoteo, called Susurro, who waxed fat and sluggish as age stole upon him, yet lost nothing of the sweetness of his nature nor of the thunderousness of his purr, the doves increased and multiplied ; the little garden yielded ever freshly its substance of fresh food and sweet-smelling flowers ; the ass, Flojo, tenderly cherished by his masters, developed yet greater prodigies of laziness as his years advanced ; and the brothers themselves, happy in leading a life in all ways innocent and very excellent in the sight of Heaven, knew not what it was to grow old, because their hearts ever remained young.

And in the fullness of their years, their good lives ended, Fray Antonio and Fray Inocencio passed out gently from time into eternity, and were gathered home to God.

## NIÑITA.

ALL her life long, that is to say for very nearly seventeen years, Niñita had lived in the little town of Santa Cruz. Not the old Santa Cruz, but the new one—the Villa Nueva de Santa Cruz de la Cañada, as they called it, those lank Spaniards who built it, in compliance with the orders of the pious King Philip, up on the head-waters of the Rio Grande del Norte, a trifle less than three hundred years ago. And the town to-day is very much what it was when its founders, having, as they believed, sufficiently fulfilled the king's command, ceased building. Twenty or thirty *adobe* houses, low and mellow-brown as the sun strikes down upon them, cluster around three sides of the *plaza*. On the fourth side stands the old *adobe* church of Nuestra Señora del Cármen, grown to stately proportions in modern times—that is to say, within the past two centuries—but most revered because of its old chapel that was builded first of all, when the good Franciscans came out into the wilderness to save heathen souls. And in this chapel is the gracious image of Our Lady that the great Queen Isabel, long before the new town of Santa Cruz was thought of, had caused to be made and sent over seas for the edification of those con-

verted to the true faith in her new-found island realm. Niñita greatly loved that sweet image, and, on occasion, she made to it her most especial prayers.

But Niñita, while a good girl who went to the sacrament regularly, and who regularly first cleared her little conscience of the various small sins which accumulated upon it from month to month, had not often been moved to address to Our Lady any very earnest prayers. Her life was still too young, too fresh, too joyous in its sweet innocence to make any very earnest praying on her part necessary. Three times, in all, she had come to Our Lady with petitions which came strongly and warmly from her heart: once when little Cárlos was born and her mother lay very, very ill—so ill that the *padre* came with the holy oil, and the nurse opened the window in the thick *adobe* wall, that the free spirit might find its way out easily and so swiftly get to heaven; once when the *burro* fell down and crushed her father with the load of wood; and once when a pestilence of small-pox was destroying right and left over in the near-by *pueblo* of San Juan. This last prayer was that Santa Cruz might be spared—and she was quite conscious, down in the very depths of her heart, that the real burden of her prayer was that her own pretty face might escape the pestilence. It horrified her to think that she might have to go through life seamed and scarred like old Dolores. And all her prayers had been granted. By a miracle, as the *padre* said, her mother did not die, but got well. The American doctor said that her life was saved because the window was opened and some fresh air got into the room—the first that had been there for years. Niñita, who



shared the contempt of her race for fresh air, believed the *padre*. Her father, who was a wiry little man, got well, too, though the poor *burro* died, having broken his back. And, as a dead *burro* is a thing almost unknown, the people came from miles around to look at his little fuzzy corpse, and stroked, almost tenderly, his long ears, out of which the wag had gone forever. Nor did the pestilence of small-pox come to Santa Cruz. Now who can wonder, her prayers having been so fully answered, that Niñita loved the gentle face and figure of Our Lady, and knelt before her reverently?

There was, indeed, about Santa Cruz a perfect placidity that well might produce a quiet, loving faith such as dwelt serenely in Niñita's little breast. Since that dreadful day in January, three-and-thirty years before, when the battle was fought, out on the *mesa*, and the victorious *Americanos* came into the town and wrecked the *padre's* house, and despoiled the church of its treasures—a sad day's work still silently testified to by the broken walls and bare sacristy—since that dreadful day there had not been a single event of any sort to stir the town from its perfect quietude. Niñita's father had been in that fight, and still bore upon his right arm the brave scar where the American saber had cut in to the bone. In his shoulder he still carried the American bullet that abruptly ended his fighting. But all this happened long before Niñita's day. She knew of it only as a dreadful story that was told to her when she was a little child—when she really was the baby-girl of the household, "*la niñita*"—sitting close by her father's side out on the stone pavement before the doorway in the cool evenings, while the wind blew fresh

through the broad valley and the sun went down beyond the mountains in a golden blaze.

During all her life there had been in Santa Cruz only peace and happiness. Her father, somewhat fitfully, to be sure, had tilled his little plot of ground, lying close upon the margin of the Rio Grande, with his two little steers and his little wooden plow; and Niñita herself had helped in this work, paddling about barefooted in the mud and with a clumsy hoe turning the water from the *acéquia* from channel to channel until the whole field was freshened and gladdened by its grateful presence. Then, when her day's work in the fields was ended, she would wash her feet in the stream and trot home to help in making supper ready—not a very serious performance, for the supper was *atole* and goat's-milk almost the year round. After supper she would bring the water from the spring; placing the great *tinaja* close by the open chimney, where, through the chill night, the water would grow deliciously cool in the draft. As she grew older it was noticed that among the village maidens Niñita bore her water-jar upon her head most gracefully, and was the lightest, lithest, liveliest, and prettiest of them all. And she was such a sweet, helpful little body, so ready with a kind word and a kind act, that even her girl friends forgave her her good looks and loved her. Surely there was every reason why she should be happy; and she was happy—as happy as the day was long: and, somehow, the days are very long down in that pleasant old New Spain.

But now, at last, a trouble had overtaken Niñita, and for the fourth time in her life she had stolen into

the chapel of Our Lady to pray. Vespers were over, and through all the great church there was a duskiness. Into the little chapel a gleam of light came through the western window, and played upon Our Lady's golden crown—not the crown of real gold that was sent by Queen Isabel (that had gone northward long ago in the saddle-bag of an *Americano*), but the gilded crown that had been made of late in Paris, and that Our Lady—failing to get anything better—wore with a gracious serenity. The light played, too, upon Our Lady's face—a gentle, loving face, that Niñita felt was looking down upon her full of sympathy. And so, coming as near as her respect for the holy image would permit her, though not so near as her heart prompted, she dropped down upon her knees in the dusk and prayed. She knelt there upon the clay floor for a long while—so long that the dusk passed into gloom and the gloom into dark—but still a faint ray of light stole in from the west, and through the darkness the saintly face looked kindly down upon her, and a dim glory seemed to shine from the golden crown. At last she rose. There were tears in her eyes, but her heart was lighter. She stole out softly from the chapel, through the dark church, and into the starlight. She did not see the *padre*, nor did he speak to her as she passed him in the cool darkness. He was a wise and good man, and he knew that sometimes hearts grow too tender to be touched by any hand but God's own.

But this time Niñita's prayers were not for her people. At her home, in the *adobe* house, over on the other side of the *plaza*, all was well. As she came from the church she found her father smoking his

*cigarrito* with unruffled happiness—sitting the while, like a patriarch of old, before his gate in the evening. Within the house her mother was going through the mysterious process that Mexican women probably believe to be dish-washing. On the clay floor her little brother was contending amicably with the big dog for a bone. There was nothing wrong here; it was a household permeated by contentment and possessed by peace. No, Niñita's sorrow was not for her people. For the first time in her life she was sorrowful for herself. Her prayer was for her own right guidance—the prayer that the saints have had put up to them so many times in the long ages since the world began: that a maiden's love may be led and guided in the right way.

A year before, Niñita would have laughed had any one told her that this world-old prayer would so soon be hers. She would have laughed, and would have shyly pointed to tall Manuel, who never was far from her side in those happy days. That she should marry Manuel had been decided upon by old José and old Manuel while yet the two were children, making little *adobes* and building toy houses together out under the big cotton-wood tree, by the *acéquia*. It was a marriage that in every way would be desirable. Old Manuel and old José were the fastest of friends. They had fought together, and had been wounded together, and had suffered loss of property together when the hated *Americanos* invaded the land: and what binds men more strongly together than brotherhood in arms and community in wrongs? And then for years they had been wrangling good-naturedly over the right to the water that flowed across a field of José's before it reached

Manuel's land. For their old friendship's sake they were eager to have the marriage take place; and for the sake of settling the one dispute that ever had come to jar upon their friendship, it was agreed that this field over which the water came should be Niñita's portion. There was great satisfaction between the two old fellows when this excellent plan was thought of and decided upon. In their joy they drank more of the Albuquerque wine than was good for them, and so were roundly rated by their wives.

Nor was their manifest destiny at all objected to by Niñita and Mannel as they grew up out of childhood and came to know about it. Mannel would have been hard to please indeed had he not been pleased with Niñita, the roundest, daintiest little body in all the valley between Antonito and Santa Fé. And Niñita had equal reason to be satisfied with Manuel. He was a gallant young fellow, with crisp black hair, black eyes that were bold yet tender, a brave figure, and the natural grace that is the heritage of the children of the South. He was, too, as good-hearted as he was handsome. Everybody spoke well of him; and, what is more surprising, the praise that he got was deserved. It seemed a match made in heaven; Niñita thought so, certainly, sometimes, when her brown eyes were turned up to his, and each saw plainly the other's love.

And yet now Niñita had prayed from the depths of her soul that the sweet Lady would guide aright the love that was in her heart. And in thus praying she had admitted to Our Lady, while yet denying it to herself, that the love which for so long had flowed on smoothly in the same pleasant channel had begun to

stray from its right course—that within her heart was going on a fight between an old love and a new.

This fight was something more than an ordinary heart-battle; it was a veritable war of races. Manuel's rival—of whose existence, as yet, Manuel had but a faint, uncertain suspicion—was not of his hybrid race, that strange mixture of Spanish and Indian blood that has come to be known as Mexican. John Grant was pure Saxon: tall, large-limbed, with merry blue eyes that yet had a world of tenderness in them, and with blonde hair and beard; and for a man who had run a level for a thousand miles or so across the plains, and who had been making surveys for a year or more under the blazing sun of New Mexico, he was wonderfully fair. To Niñita, when he first cantered across the *plaza*, in the early morning sunlight, and pulled up short at her father's gate, this blonde young fellow, in blue flannel shirt and corduroy trousers tucked into his boots, appeared as a god. Down in the depths of her heart, among the drops of her Indian blood, she had, if not exactly a belief, at least a touch of superstitious faith, in the coming again of the fair Montezuma; and she knew that when the god returned it would be with the first rays of the rising sun. But this faint remnant of a nearly shattered creed had no real hold upon her, and in a moment she laughed a little to herself, and then, more seriously, exorcised the evil spirit that had put such thoughts into her mind by making upon her breast the sign of the cross.

Very charming she looked, to be sure, standing there in the shadow of the gateway, with the courtyard behind her all lit up by the light of the rising sun.

Grant, looking at her from under the broad brim of his felt hat, thought that she was the most beautiful creature he had ever seen; and this somewhat hastily formed opinion was not far from the truth.

In shaky but intelligible Spanish he asked for permission to see her father, and when old José came out from the court-yard he set about explaining his business. The railroad, coming down from the North, was to traverse that very field over which José and Manuel had quarreled so pleasantly in the years gone by—the field that was to be Niñita's marriage portion—and Grant had come, he said, to pay for the right of way. A great time he had making clear to José the meaning of that same phrase, "right of way," for it involved the meaning also of railroads—monstrosities of which only a hazy conception resided in José's mind. But when, at last, the old man fairly got the bearings of the case, his anger got the better of his Mexican politeness. A railroad cross his land? Never! He had fought the invaders once, and he was not too old to fight them again. He would die before he would see the fields laid waste which he had tilled his life long, and which his father and grandfather and all his line before him had tilled for two centuries. He did not care for money; God had given him all that was needful to make life happy, and money was of no use. He had had enough of *Americanos* in the past—his hand touched the place where the Texan ball still lay in his shoulder—and this particular *Americano*, he said abruptly in conclusion, was at liberty to go at once to the devil. And, saying this, old José pulled Niñita within the gate, and then slammed it in John Grant's face.

Grant, who was not at all prepared for such an outburst, but who was in the habit of taking things coolly, slowly gathered up the reins from his horse's neck and went away, whistling meditatively. But he was thinking less of what José had said than of what he had seen. For many a long day he carried in his mind the picture that he had come upon so suddenly as he cantered across the *plaza*: Niñita standing in the shadow of the doorway, with the court-yard bright in the morning sunlight beyond.

Now, of course, a railroad that is to unite two nations can not be stopped by a single cranky old Mexican—especially when the railroad-builders are more than ready to pay their way. And back of this truism, in this particular instance, was the fact that John Grant was not the sort of man to drop a piece of work when he had once fairly begun it. He did not go to the devil, as José had impolitely suggested; on the contrary, he went to the company's solicitor, and explained to that functionary the necessity of using means more powerful than persuasion to bring José to terms. Evidently this was not a case in which mild measures would prove useful: and yet, for some reason which he did not satisfactorily account for to himself, Grant made a number of visits to the *adobe* house in Santa Cruz before he finally invoked the power of the law. Upon old José all his blandishments were thrown away. The old fellow did not suffer his anger to overcome him again; but with Spanish dignity and Mexican stubbornness he held his ground. Between him and the *Americanos* there was a gulf of hatred that nothing could bridge—least of all, a railroad that was to destroy his lands.



This was his position, and he held it as resolutely as he had held the redoubt out on the *mesa* three-and-thirty years before.

It was during these days, while Grant came and went, that the first doubts as to the happiness and fitness of her future found their way into Niñita's heart, and bred trouble there. They were only little doubts, at first; but they grew, and grew, until at last they wrenched and tortured her whole being. She still loved Manuel, but she felt that a stronger love was taking hold upon her; and she even hoped that an answering love came out to meet her own.

All this was not a matter of a day or a week. It came gradually. The summer was slipping by, and, as the hot days one by one went past, each marked a little change in Niñita's heart. Old José, finding that the law of the commonwealth is greater than the will of the individual citizen, had surrendered sullenly, and sullenly had pocketed the comfortable sum allowed him for his wasted land; but he persisted in believing that Grant was the cause of all his troubles, and upon that particular *Americano* he had concentrated the hate which previously had been bestowed upon the American nation at large. Old Manuel and young Manuel shared this feeling, for they also felt that they had suffered wrong. Indeed, through all the valley there was an under-current of anger and discontent as the country-side folk saw the current setting down upon them from the North, and felt themselves powerless to stay it. They cared nothing for progress, for improvement, these simple souls; and they cared very little for the unheard-of quantities of money which were paid for the damage

done their lands in comparison with what they cared for the loss of the lands themselves. But what irritated them most keenly, though not one of them could understand, much less explain, this feeling, was the sudden inroad of a civilization utterly unlike, utterly inharmonious with, their own. Instinctively they recognized the advent of a race stronger than theirs, which must of necessity first subjugate and then exterminate them—not by force of arms, but by force of brains. These white men from the North were invaders, surely destined to be conquerors; nor were they the less to be dreaded because they came as friends and were free-handed with their gold. In body and brain they were the superiors of the people among whom they came; by the inevitable law of nature theirs must be the dominant race. Not a single Mexican ever went through this analysis of his hatred of the incoming *Americanos*; but, all the same, the hatred was there, and this was its cause. It did not show on the surface, but it smoldered hot beneath the crust of good manners with which all Mexicans are veneered.

And Niñita had so far forgotten the sentiment of her people, the will of her father, and her faith to her lover, that she had suffered her love to go out toward one of these hated strangers; and, even more than this, she had so far forgotten her maidenly dignity that she had given her love unasked. In his curt fashion, so unlike the gracious forms of speech to which she had been through all her life accustomed, John Grant had said many civil things to the Mexican beauty; and he certainly did very unnecessarily prolong his dealings with her father, for no other reason than that he might in-

crease his opportunities for seeing her pretty face. During all the summer, while the embankment was creeping down the valley—coming to and crossing José's field and passing on to the southward—he made many excuses for holding interviews with the master of the old *adobe* house in Santa Cruz. Being courteously received on these occasions—given to eat if his visit happened upon a meal-time, and to drink if it did not—Grant promptly arrived at the conclusion that the old Mexican had been humbugging him all along, and was only too glad to get his land off his hands at so good a price; a conclusion as near the truth as the guesses of a man of one race usually are about the feelings of a man of another.

As to making love seriously to Niñita, Grant never once thought of it. Marrying a Mexican and marrying a mulatto were much the same thing to his Saxon mind; and he was a good fellow in the main, and was altogether above the love-making that could end only in her wrong. But it was only natural, he thought, to amuse himself a little with this pretty girl whom fate had brought across his path. His work was hard enough, and his life was lonely enough down in that semi-barbarous region, he felt, to entitle him to play a little when he had a chance. Nor did he for a moment think, to do him justice, that his play could be mistaken by Niñita for earnest. In the civilization that he understood, men might make pretty speeches to pretty girls without a serious meaning attaching to their light words; he did not realize that in this other civilization which he had come upon things were not the same. Indeed, he did not realize that this new phase of life that he had en-

countered was a civilization at all. When he wrote to his friends in the East he described himself as living among half-reclaimed savages, and he believed this description to be the truth. So, when he had the chance, he said nice things in his jerky Spanish to Niñita, and was not a little pleased to see the color come into her pretty brown face and the long lashes droop over her beautiful brown eyes.

He did not have such chances often, for Mexican girls are sharply looked after, especially when an *Americano* is near. But now and then he would come upon her standing in the gateway—as on the day when he saw her for the first time—and once or twice he was so fortunate as to meet her at the spring. And so, little by little, without knowing it and without meaning to do it, he stole Niñita's heart away.

The summer now was nearly ended. The embankment had gone on down the valley, past the village, and the trains had begun to run—constant sources of wonder and alarm to the simple folk who up to this time had held that, besides their own legs, *burros* and rattling ox-carts were the only known means of transportation. Grant's work near Santa Cruz was ended, and he was going back to the East; he had had enough of the barbarism of the Southwest, he said.

Perhaps, had Niñita known that he was so soon to leave her, she would not have gone that evening to the chapel of Our Lady of Cármen to pray. But she did not know it, and her troubled heart sorely needed comfort and rest. That day, as she was coming from the spring in the sunset light, Manuel had met her, and had asked her, very gently and tenderly, why she had so

changed. Had he been harsh, had he insisted upon his right to her love, she might not have felt very deeply his reproaches. But it was not in Manuel's nature to be harsh with Niñita, and the love that he asked for was asked for humbly. In the evening light, he looked down upon her with the love in his eyes that once had seemed to her so perfect and so satisfying; and she had almost cursed herself because, as she turned toward him, his dark face and eyes and hair disappeared for a moment, and in their stead came a vision of blue eyes set in a fair face, framed in yellow hair and beard. She could not answer him, and for the first time in their lives he had gone from her sorrowing.

This was the trouble that Niñita had taken to Our Lady over in the chapel; and with all the strength of her heart she had prayed that the love which was in her might be guided in the right way. As she came out through the dusky church into the white starlight, it seemed to her that her prayer had been answered. The gentle Lady seemed to have told her that her love belonged to her own people, not to strangers; and presently she found herself softly saying over and over, under her breath, Manuel's name—just as she used to do before the *Americanos* came down into the land. For the first time in a long while she was possessed by a spirit of love and peace. Our Lady had heard and had answered her prayer.

She went out and seated herself upon the stones in front of the gateway—looking in across the court-yard, and over the *adobe* wall beyond, at the young moon just rising above the mountains. As she sat there, still

and happy, she heard the beat of a horse's hoofs out upon the road that led across the *mesa* to Española. The regular cadence made a little tune in her mind, to which she said "Ma-nu-el, Ma-nu-el," half unconsciously. The hoof-beats came nearer, softly over the bit of sandy road beyond the *padre's* garden, and then with a clatter up the stony hill behind the church. Then, before she realized it, the horse had crossed the *plaza*, and John Grant had dismounted and was standing by her side. How beautiful he looked standing there, uncovered, in the moonlight! Niñita's heart beat hard, and all the peace that her prayer had given her was gone!

He had come to bid good-by, Grant said. He was going away—going to his home far off across the plains and mountains; he feared that he never would see the *señorita* again; he was glad that he had met her thus alone; would she be sorry when he was gone?

He spoke lightly, but there was a touch of real feeling in his tone—for no one, not even a cool-headed *Americano*, could know Niñita without loving her at least a little—and the tone meant more for her than the words. All that she felt was that he did love her, and that he was going away. In spite of herself she gave a little sob.

"Poor little girl; then you are sorry?" said Grant, gently. He felt very kindly toward her, seeing how truly she grieved because he was going away.

"And will the *señorita* give a little kiss—*un besito*—in parting?" he added.

He had laid his hand upon her shoulder as he spoke, and as he touched her he felt her tremble. For an instant she did not answer. Then, with a sudden, pas-

sionate movement, she turned toward him, flung her arms about his neck, and pressed her lips to his. It was *un beso*—not *un besito*—and the memory of it staid by him to his last day.

There was a sound of footsteps. Grant gently unclasped the arms from about his neck, and said, in English—for Niñita's kiss had startled him so much that his small stock of Spanish was all gone from him—"Good-by, dear child! God bless you!" Then he jumped on his horse and galloped away.

Niñita stood dizzily for a moment. Then she heard her father's voice, but sharp and cruel: "Thou hast disgraced thy name!" And another voice, broken and piteous, said: "Thou hast betrayed thy love!"

This, then, was the answer that Our Lady had given to her prayer! She sank down slowly, miserably upon the stones.

After what seemed to her a long while, she heard her father's voice again: "There is work for us to do to-night, Manuel. Get thy knife and thy horse!" In a dreamy way she heard departing footsteps, and then, after a while—she could not tell how long—the tramp of horses. Her father rode out through the gateway, close by her side, and she heard him call Manuel's name; she heard Manuel answer, and she heard the sound of the horses' feet on the stony hill behind the church, as the two rode away together through the faint moonlight. As she lay there in dumb agony, she knew that her father and her lover had ridden out into the night to kill John Grant.

Grant had ten miles before him to the camp at

Chamita, but he knew the road, and he had the light of the young moon. It was a still, delicious night—the sort of night that comes often in New Mexico—and he rode slowly, that he might enjoy it to the full. This was his last ride along the lovely Rio Grande valley—he was to start for the States the next evening—and he wanted to make the most of it. And even had he not been disposed to ride slowly for the ride's sake, his queer adventure with the pretty Mexican would have made him forget to press his horse to speed. He was a good deal astonished by Niñita's demonstration, and a good deal flattered by it, as any man would have been.

“Poor little body! I really do believe that she loves me,” he said to himself, with a good deal of quiet complacency.

And then he fell to wondering how much of his adventure it would be advisable to tell to Miss Eleanor Whittredge, of Boston—for whose use and benefit he had spent a month's pay in the purchase of an engagement ring, the last time he had been in the States. And so his thoughts wandered back and forth from the East to the West; from Miss Whittredge in Boston, whom he loved sincerely, and whose dignified person and character he as sincerely respected, to this wild little Mexican girl in Santa Cruz, who had startled him with a kiss such as all the Miss Whittredges in the world together could not give. He went slowly over the *mesa*, slowly across the bridge to Española, and slowly along by the river-side toward Chamita. The night was perfect, and his thoughts moved about pleasantly in his mind. Once, when he aroused himself, he heard horses galloping on the other side of the river—along the shorter road from



Santa Cruz to Chamita, that crossed the river at the ford. Had he been in a hurry, he would have taken that road himself; but he was not in a hurry. People down in New Mexico have a habit of galloping about the country at night, and, unless they happen to be galloping up behind you, you do not pay much attention to them. So Grant relapsed into his musing.

He was aroused very completely, just as he had passed a clump of *piñones*, by a rush of horses toward him, and by a thrill of pain as a knife sliced its way into his left arm. Had not his own horse swerved just as the thrust was made at him, that ride in the moonlight would have been his last. Grant had not lived for five years on the plains, and for a year more in New Mexico, without picking up enough of the customs of the country to know what to do in such an emergency. He struck his long Mexican spurs into his horse, and felt for his revolver. There was not much satisfaction in finding that his pistol-pocket was empty; he had left his revolver in camp! If the other people had pistols, it was all up with him; if they had only knives, he had a chance of getting off. His horse was a good one and fresh, and the bound he had given when he felt the spurs had left the others behind. So he rode onward through the moonlight, crouching down over the high pommel of his saddle, and expecting every moment to feel a pistol-ball cracking in through his ribs.

But the ball did not come.

"They must be Mexicans," he thought, "and that accounts for their being without pistols and operating with knives."

This reflection comforted him a little; but he knew

that a single unarmed man against two men armed—even though the two be Mexicans, and armed only with knives—has only a trifling chance of coming out victor. He gave his horse the spurs again, and set his teeth hard ; and so he went along the river road, not ten yards ahead of the Mexicans, for a couple of miles. Then the luck turned in his favor.

As he rounded a bend in the road he came upon three of his own men, who had halted and faced about when they heard horses galloping up behind them. They sat quite still : two of them holding cocked revolvers, the third with a Winchester all ready to bring up to his shoulder.

“It is I—Grant ; these brutes have cut me. Shoot !” he shouted, as he recognized the party. In the East, an order of this sort might be questioned. In the Southwest, we shoot first and question afterward. The two revolvers and the rifle cracked together, and the foremost of the two Mexicans fell with three balls through him—all three had shot at the same man. The other Mexican went straight through Grant’s party, and on like a flash up the road. But he did not go far. The Winchester cracked again, and his horse galloped on with an empty saddle.

“That was a close call, old fellow. I didn’t think these Mexican hounds had pluck enough to turn highway robbers. But we’ve settled ’em this time. Winchester and revolvers are ahead of Mexican knives every time—eh, old man ?”

But Grant did not answer. He was dizzy and faint.

“Take him into camp, Jim ; Ned and I’ll look after these beggars. We’ve got to hunt up the *alcalde* at

Española, I suppose, and make depositions and give ourselves up for trial, and that sort of thing. An awful waste of time over two blackguard Mexicans; but it can't be helped, you know.—By Jove! there's blood running out of your sleeve, Grant. You must have an ugly hole in you. Here, get your coat off and let's tie you up, and keep you from leaking."

So Grant was tied up, and then taken into camp, where he fainted dead away.

It was the evening of the next day, and again Niñita went into the chapel of Our Lady, and knelt upon the clay floor—not near the sweet image, but far away from it in the darkness.

Niñita's heart was broken—was dead. She could not pray. She scarcely knew why she had come to the chapel; there only stirred in her a vague feeling that here, though the gracious Lady no longer could be her friend, no longer could listen to her prayers, at least she would not be crushed to the earth by cruel, bitter words. No one could be her friend any more. Her mother had cursed her when her father was brought home dead; had told her: "This is thy work. Go thou also, with thy sins upon thee, and die!" and old Manuel, looking upon his dead son, had echoed her mother's curse. Even the *padre*, the good *padre*, had turned from her when she looked toward him with her eyes imploring pity. As she stood in the gateway the people of the village had crowded about her, and their words of cruel abuse even yet were ringing in her ears.

Yet, had she really sinned? She could not think

so. In her own heart she knew that that kiss was a kiss of renunciation and farewell. Much of her life went with it, but all of her life that was left would have been Manuel's. She was sure of this, and she was sure that Our Lady would have given her strength to forget, after a while, the love that had so mastered her, and would have made her love for Manuel once more strong and true. If! O God, if—and Niñita bowed her head, and a great agony filled her soul.

No, there was no use praying. Our Lady looked down upon her no longer gently, but with a grave severity that turned her broken heart to stone. Not even here could there be comfort for her. She must indeed have sinned if the gracious image turned against her; and then in her ears sounded again her mother's words: "Go thou also, with thy sins upon thee, and die." Yes, that was all that there was left for her to do. It would be very easy to die; and, perhaps, in death there would be peace.

She knelt there for a long time, while the darkness gathered around her. How very, very long ago it seemed to her was that evening when she had knelt and asked Our Lady to guide aright her love; and yet she knew that it had been but the evening of the day before. But time had ceased to have any meaning for Niñita; she was already reaching out into the dim vastness of eternity.

Through the still night, as she knelt there silently, prayerless, there came the sound of a locomotive-whistle—it was the night express for the North. The train was still miles away down the line, for sound travels very far in that still, pure air, and more than a quarter

of an hour would pass before it would go thundering by the village and up the valley beyond.

Suddenly, Niñita gave a little shudder. Then she rose steadily and walked out through the darkness of the church into the faint moonlight—walked on down the hill behind the church, past the *padre's* garden, out into the fields beyond, and so at last to where the railroad swept around a curve through a grove of cotton-woods. This was the field that was to have been her marriage portion. It was under those cotton-woods, by the *acéquia*, that she and Manuel had made little *adobes* in the years so long gone by. She noticed how greatly the trees had grown, and wondered to herself that she had never noticed it before. Through their branches she could see the head-light of the engine, a great ball of fire, coming up the line. She did not know that Grant was sitting in the lobby of the sleeping-car—looking a little pale, but not much the worse for the wound he was telling the conductor about as he smoked his cigar. It was better that Niñita did not know how close Grant was to her. At least one added pang of grief was spared her at the last.

“Must’a’ been one of them Mexican goats, I guess, Bill,” said the engineer of the express to his fireman, as they felt a little jar, just as the engine rounded the curve, and then saw something black glance down the embankment and fall among the trees.

“Guess so. Serve him right for bein’ fool enough to go to sleep on the track. Just like a Mexican goat to do that. Goats and Mexicans, they’re all much of a muchness, and all d—— fools together. What’s the use

of any of 'em *I* don't know, and I haven't found the fellow that does." And the engine and train, the advance guard of the coming race, swept on up the line.

Down under the cotton-wood, by the *acéquia*, Niñita—one poor little soul of the race that must go—lay dead.

## PANCHA : A STORY OF MONTEREY.

WHEN the Conde de Monterey, being then Viceroy of this gracious realm of New Spain, sent his viceregal commissioners, attended by holy priests, up into the northern country to choose a site for an outpost city, there was found no spot more beautiful, none more worthy to be thus honored, than this where the city of Monterey stands to-day. And so the commissioners halted beside the great spring, the *ojo de agua*, that gushes out from its tangle of white pebbles in what now is the very heart of the town; and the priests set up the sacred cross and sang a sweet song of praise and thankfulness to the good God who had so well guided them to where they would be; and the colonists entered in and possessed the land.

This all happened upon a fair day now close upon three hundred years gone by. From century to century the city has grown, yet always in accord with the lines established by its founders. The houses a-building now are as the houses built three hundred years ago; and, going yet farther into the past, as the houses which were built by the Moors when they came into the Gothic peninsula, bringing with them the life and customs of a land that even then was old. So it has come to pass

that the traveler who sojourns here—having happily left behind him on the farther side of the Rio Grande the bustle and confusion and hurtful toil of this overpowering nineteenth century—very well can believe himself transported back to that blessed time and country in which the picturesque was ranked above the practical, and in which not the least of human virtues was the virtue of repose.

Very beautiful is the site of Monterey: its noble flanking mountains, the Silla and the Mitras, are east and west of it; its grand rampart, the Sierra Madre, sweeps majestically from flank to flank to the southward, and its outlying breastwork, a range of far-away blue peaks, is seen mistily off in the north. And the city is in keeping with its setting. The quaint, mysterious houses, inclosing sunny gardens and tree-planted court-yards; the great cathedral where, in the dusk of evening, at vespers, one may see each night new wonders, Rembrandt-like, beautiful, in light and shade; the church of St. Francis, and the old ruined church beside it—built, first of all, in honor of the saint who had guided the Viceroy's commissioners so well; the bowery *plaza*, with the great dolphin-fountain in its center, and the tree-clad *plazuelas*, also with fountains; the narrow streets; the old-time market-place, alive with groups of buyers and sellers fit to make glad a painter's heart—all these picturesque glories, together with many more, unite to make the perfect picturesqueness of Monterey.

Yet Pancha, who had been born in Monterey, and who never had been but a league away from it in the whole space of her little lifetime, did not know that the city in which she lived was picturesque at all.



She did know, though, that she loved it very dearly. Quite the saddest time that she had ever passed through was the week that she had spent once at the Villa de Guadalupe—a league away to the eastward, at the Silla's foot—with her aunt Antonia. It was not that *tia* Antonia was not good to her, nor that life at the Villa de Guadalupe—as well conducted a little town, be it said, with as quaint a little church, as you will find in the whole State of Nuevo Leon—was not pleasant in its way; but it was that she longed for her own home. And when, coming back at last to the city, perched on the forward portion of uncle Tadeo's *burro*, she peeped over the *burro's* long ears—at the place where the road turns sharply just before it dips to cross the valley—and caught sight once more of the dome of the cathedral, and the clock-tower of the market-house, and the old Bishop's Palace on its hill in the far background, with the Mitras rising beyond, and a flame of red and gold above the Sierra left when the sun went down: when Pancha's longing eyes rested once more on all these dear sights of home, she buried her little face in *tio* Tadeo's pudgy shoulder and fairly sobbed for joy.

Many a person, though, coming a stranger and with a stranger's prejudices into this gentle, lovely Mexican land, would have thought Pancha's love of home quite incomprehensible; for her home, the house in which she dwelt, was not lovely to eyes brought up with a rigorous faith in right angles and the monotonous regularity of American city walls. In point of fact, persons of this sort might have held—and, after their light, with some show of justice—that Pancha's home was not a house at all.

Crossing the city of Monterey from west to east is a little valley, the *arroyo* of Santa Lucía, into which, midway in its passage, comes through another *arroyo* of a few hundred yards in length the water from the *ojo de agua*—the great spring whereat the Conde's commissioners paused content, and beside which the holy fathers sang songs of praise. Along both banks of these two little valleys grow trees, and canebrakes, and banana groves, and all manner of bushes and most pleasant grass; and in among the bushes and trees, here and there, are little huts of wattled golden cane overlaid with a thatch of brown. It was in one of these *jacales*, standing a stone's-throw below the causeway that crosses the *arroyo* of the *ojo de agua*, upon the point of land that juts out between the two valleys before they become one, that Pancha was born, and where most contentedly she lived. Over the *jacal* towered a great pecan-tree; and a banana grew graciously beside it, and back of it was a huddle of feathery, waving canes. Truly it was not a grand home, but Pancha loved it; nor would she have exchanged it even for one of the fine houses the stone walls of which you could see above and beyond it, showing gray through the green of the trees.

For nearly all the years of her little life the love of the beautiful city of Monterey, of her poor little home that yet was so dear to her, of the good father and mother who had cared for her so well since she came to them from the kind God who sends beautiful children into the world, for her little brother and sister, the twins Antonio and Antonia, who gave a world of trouble—for they were sad pickles—but who repaid her by a world of childish lovingness for her care: for nearly all

her life long these loves had sufficed to fill and to satisfy Pancha's heart. But within a year now a new love, a love that was stronger and deeper than all of these put together, had come to her and had grown to be a part of her life. And Pancha knew, down in the depths of her heart, that this love had begun on the very first day that her eyes had rested upon Pepe's gallant figure and handsome face—the day when Pepe, having been made captain of a brave company of *contrabandistas*, had come up to Monterey to partake of the Holy Sacrament at Easter, and to be blessed by his old father, and to receive the congratulations of his friends.

Pancha's father, Cristóbal, a worthy *cargador* who never in the whole twenty years that he had discharged the responsible duties of his calling had lost or injured a single article confided to his care, and old Manuel, who held the honorable position of *sereno*—a member of the night-watch—in the city of Monterey, had known each other from a time long before Pancha was born; and from a full understanding of each other's good qualities, and from certain affinities and common tastes, the two old fellows had come in the course of years to be the closest of friends. Cristóbal the *cargador*—better known, being a little bandy-legged man, as Tobalito—was scarcely less delighted than was Manuel himself when Pepe, a motherless lad who had grown to manhood in the care of a good aunt, came up from his home in Tamaulipas that Easter-tide to tell of his good fortune. The boy was a gallant boy, they both agreed—as they drank his health more times than was quite good for them in Parras brandy of the best, on which never a *tlaco* of duty had been paid—and before him

had opened now a magnificent future. Being a captain of *contrabandistas* at twenty-two, what might he not be at thirty? His fortune was assured! And old Catalina shared in this joy of her husband's and of her husband's friend, and drank also, relishingly, a little mug of brandy to Pepe's good fortune—present and to come. Even the twins, Antonio and Antonia, entered into the spirit of the festive occasion, and manifested their appreciation of it by refraining from signal mischief for the space of a whole hour: at the end of which period Pancha, perceiving that they were engaged in imitating the process of washing clothes in the stream, and judging rightly that the earnestness of their operations boded no good, was just in time to rescue the yellow cat from a watery grave. And it was on this happy day, as Pancha knew afterward, that her love for Pepe first began.

This was a year past, now; and for many months Pancha had been gladdened by the knowledge that her love was returned—though, as yet, this sweet certainty had not come to her in words. Indeed, during the past twelvemonth Pepe had been but little in Monterey. As became a young captain of *contrabandistas* who longed to prove that he deserved to wear his spurs, his time had been passed for the most part in making handsome dashes from the Zona Libre into the interior. Already the fame of his brilliant exploits was great along the frontier; already to the luckless officers of the *contraresguardo* his name was a mocking and a reproach. What with his knowledge of the mountain paths and hiding-places, his boldness and his prudence, his information—coming it might be treason to say from where,

but always exact and trustworthy—of where the revenue people would be at any hour of any day or night, the *contraresguardo* seemed to have no more chance of catching him than they had of catching the wind of heaven or the moon itself.

Once, indeed, Pepe had a narrow escape. At the outskirts of Lampazos word came to him that the customs guard was at his very heels. There was no hiding-place near; to run for it with a train of heavily laden *burros* was of no earthly use at all; to run for it without the *burros* would have been a disgrace. And Pepe did not attempt to run. As fast as they could be driven he drove the *burros* into the town, and halted them in squads of three and four at friendly houses; spoke a word or two at each door, and then galloped off with his men into the outer wilderness of *chaparral*. And when, ten minutes later, the men of the *contraresguardo* came flourishing into Lampazos, certain of victory at last, not a vestige of the *contrabando* could they find! True, in the *patios* of a dozen houses were certain weary-looking *burros* whose backs were warm, and near them were pack-saddles which were warm also; but what had been upon those pack-saddles no man could surely say. The explanation vouchsafed that the lading had been fire-wood was not, all things considered, wholly satisfactory; but it could not be disproved. And as the possession of warm pack-saddles and warm-backed *burros* is not an indictable offense even in Mexico, the *contraresguardo* could do nothing better in the premises than swear with much heartiness and ride sullenly away. And to the honor of Lampazos be it said that when, in due course of time, Pepe returned and with-

drew his *burro*-train from the town, not a single package of the *contrabando* had been stolen or lost !

So Pepe, by his genius and his good luck, proved his right to wear his spurs. And the merchants of the interior held him in high esteem ; and people generally looked upon him as a rising young man ; and Pancha, who read aright the story told by his bold yet tender brown eyes, suffered herself to love this gallant captain of *contrabandistas* with all her heart.

Yet while this was the first time that Pancha had loved, it was not the first time that love had been given her. A dozen young fellows, as everybody knew, and as even she, though quite to herself, demurely acknowledged, were in love with her to their very ears. One or two of them had gone so far, indeed, as to open communications, through proper representatives, for the rare favor of her hand. The most earnest, though the least demonstrative of these, was a certain captain in the *contraresguardo*, by name Pedro ; a good fellow in his way, but quite shut out beyond the pale of reputable society, of course, by his unfortunate calling.

Naturally, Pancha never was likely to think very seriously of loving Pedro ; yet pity for him, acting on her gentle heart, had made her in some sort his friend. It was not altogether his fault that he was an officer of the *contraresguardo*, and other people besides Pancha believed that but for this blight upon him a good career might have been his. But luck had been against Pedro from the very day of his birth ; for when he was born his mother died, and a little later his father died also. Being thus left lonely in the world, he fell into the keeping of his uncle, Padre Juan, a grim priest who,

having lost all happiness in life himself, saw little reason why he should seek to make the lives of others glad. Dismally the boy grew up in this narrow, cheerless home. The Padre fain would have made of him a priest also ; but against this fate Pedro rebelled, and accepted, while yet a boy, the alternative means of livelihood that his uncle offered him in the service of the *contraresguardo*.

As his rebellion against his proposed induction into the priesthood showed, the boy had strong stuff in him. He had a mighty will of his own. And there was this in common between him and his grim uncle : a stern resolve, when duty was clear, to do duty and nothing else. Therefore it came to pass that Pedro, being entered into the hateful service of the customs preventive force, presently was recognized by his superiors as one of the very few men of the corps who, in all ways, were trustworthy ; and as trustworthiness is the rarest of virtues in the *contraresguardo*—a service so hated that usually only men of poor spirit will enter it at all—his constant loyalty brought him quick promotion as its just reward. Yet Pedro had no happiness in his advancement. Each step upward, as he very well knew, was earned at the cost of greater hatred and contempt. Those who would have been his friends, had the lines of his life fallen differently, were his enemies. Nowhere could he hope to find kindness and love. Therefore he grew yet more stern and silent, and yet more earnestly gave himself to the full discharge of the duty that was sacred to him because it was his duty, but that in his heart he abhorred. Nor did he ever waver in his faithfulness until, coming to know Pancha, his

chilled heart was warmed by her sweet looks of friendliness, the first that ever he had known; and, as fate decreed, the force of duty found arrayed against it the force of love.

Pancha had a tender, gentle nature, in which was great kindness; and before she knew Pepe there was some little chance, perhaps, that in sheer pity of his forlornness she might have given Pedro her love. This, of course, showed how weak and how thoughtless Pancha was; how ignorant of the feelings of society; how careless of the good opinion of the world. To be sure, the possibility of her loving Pedro never passed beyond a possibility; but that it went so far counted for a great deal to him, to whom, in all his life, no single gleam nor even faintest hope of love had ever come. The gentle glance or two which she had cast him in her compassionate sorrow for his friendlessness sank down into the depths of Pedro's heart, and bred there for her that great love—tender, yet almost stern in its fierce intensity—to which only a passionate, repressed nature can give birth. And through the year that passed after Pepe had gained his captaincy, and at the same time Pancha's favor, Pedro's love had grown yet stronger and deeper—grown the more, perhaps, because it was so hopeless and so deeply hid; but Pancha, whose very life was wrapped in Pepe's now, had almost ceased to remember that such a person as this rueful captain of the *contraresguardo* lived.

Still another life-thread was interwoven with the life-threads of these three. Dearest of Pancha's girlfriends was Chona—for so was shortened and softened her stately name, Ascencion—daughter of a *leñador*



whose *jacal* was near by, and with whom her father had been long on friendly terms.

A grand creature was this Chona, daughter of the *leñador*. The simple folk among whom she lived called her "La Reina," and her majestic beauty made her look indeed a queen. Yet was she not loved by those among whom she lived. Her nature was as imperious as her beauty was imperial, and, save only Pancha, there was none who called her friend. Because of their very unlikeness, these two were drawn together. Pancha had for Chona an enthusiastic devotion; and Chona graciously accepted the homage rendered as her queenly right. In the past year, though, since Pepe's triumphal visit to Monterey, a change had come over Chona that was beyond the understanding of Pancha's simple, loving heart. She no longer responded—even in the fitful fashion that had been her wont—to Pancha's lovingness. She was moody; at times she was even harsh. More than once Pancha, chancing to turn upon her suddenly, had surprised in her eyes a look that seemed born of hate itself. This change was grievous and strange to Pancha; but it troubled her less than it would have done a year before. For now her whole heart was bright with gladness in her love of Pepe, and with the glad hope that his love was given her in return.

So, for Pancha at least, the time passed blithely on. Her mood of compassion for Pedro was forgotten, and her loss of Chona's friendship—if ever she had possessed it—caused her no great sorrow; and all because her love for Pepe filled to overflowing her loving heart.

This was the way that matters stood the next Easter,

when Pepe again came up to Monterey to take part in the blessed services of the Church, to see again his old father, and again to receive graciously the congratulations of his friends.

And this time Pepe told his love to Pancha in words. In the warm twilight of the spring evening—being followed, as custom in Mexico prescribes, by the discreet *tia* Antonia, also come to Monterey for the Easter festival—they walked slowly among the bushes and trees lining the bank of the *ojo de agua*, passed beneath the arch of the causeway, and stood beside the broad, clear pool where the water of the great spring pauses a little before it flows outward to the stream. It was on this very spot, say the legends of the town, that the good Franciscan fathers, three hundred years ago, set up the holy cross and sang their song of thankfulness and praise.

And here it was—while the discreet *tia* Antonia manifested her discretion by standing where she could watch closely, yet could not hear—that to Pancha were whispered the sweetest words that ever she had heard, that ever she was to hear. In her memory dwelt for a little while joyously the picture of the dark water at her feet that, a little beyond, grew green with aquatic plants; the massive stone causeway that cast a shadow upon them in the waning light reflected from the red sky beyond the Mitras crest; the trees beside the spring swaying a little in the gentle evening wind; the hush over all of the departing day. Very dear to Pancha was the memory of this picture—until, in the same setting, came another picture, ghastly, terrible, that made the place more horrible to her than the crazing

horror of a dream. But the future was closed to her, mercifully, and in her heart, that Easter evening, was only a perfect happiness and a perfect love.

Later, when they went back to the *jacal* of wattled cane, there was great rejoicing among the older folk that Pepe's suit had sped so well. It was not, of course, a surprise to anybody, this suit of his. In point of fact, it all had been duly settled beforehand between the two old men—as a well-conducted love affair in Mexico properly must be—and this dramatic climax to it was a mere nominal concession to Pepe's foreign tastes, acquired through much association with *Americanos* upon the frontier. So, the result being satisfactory, the Parras brandy was brought forth again, and toasts were drunk to Pepe's and Pancha's long happiness. And these were followed by toasts to the success—though that was assured in advance, of course—of a great venture in which Pepe was about to engage; a venture that infallibly was to make him a rich man.

The scheme that Pepe had devised was worthy of himself. Its basis was an arrangement—made who shall say how?—that all the forces of the *contraresguardo* and *rurales* should be sent on a wild-goose chase into the mountains, and sent far enough to make sure that they should stay in the mountains for a whole night and a whole day. And, the coast being thus cleared, it was the purpose of this daring captain of *contrabandistas* to come up from the Zona Libre with not one, but with three great trains of *burros* laden with *contrabando*, and to bring these trains, in sections and under cover of darkness, actually into the city of Monterey! Further, to make quite sure that in the city he should meet with

no hindrance to the execution of his plans, he had arranged that at the hour his trains were to enter from the east, a *jacal* should be set on fire over in the western suburb. Fires occur but rarely in Monterey, and when one does occur all the town flocks to see it: it is better than a *fiesta*. It was a stroke of genius on Pepe's part to think of this diversion; and the man who owned the doomed *jacal*—one of Pepe's band who himself had a share in the venture—was eager to put so brilliant a plan into execution. Indeed, to insure success a hundred *jacales* might have been profitably consumed; for the *contrabando* was to be exceptionally rich in quality as well as great in quantity, and the profit upon it would be something that to such simple-minded folk as Manuel and Tobalito and Catalina seemed almost fabulous.

The very risk of the venture, as Pepe pointed out, constituted its safety. In the mountains there was a chance at any time of a fight, but in the city streets there was literally nobody to fear—"unless the *serenos* should turn *contraresguardo*!" he suggested; whereat there was much cheerful laughter, that of the honest *sereno* Manuel being loudest of all.

The *leñador*, Tobalito's trusted friend, hearing the sounds of festivity and snuffing the Parras brandy from afar off, came in to join them; and being informed of the happy issue of Pepe's love affair, and of Pepe's noble project, he gladly joined in drinking the double toast and in adding his good wishes to theirs. So they made merry over their hopeful prospects; and even when the twins, Antonio and Antonia, succeeded in an unwatched moment in possessing themselves of the precious bottle of Parras brandy, and thereafter, to their

great joy, emptied a considerable portion of it over the unfortunate yellow cat, a mere desultory spanking was deemed to be a meet atonement for their sinful deed.

So Pepe rode lightly out from Monterey, and behind him rode not black care, but brightest joy, and after him went good wishes and great love. When he came again he would be rich, and—dearer than all other riches—Pancha would be his. Truly, a young fellow of three-and-twenty, who had carved his own way to so brave a fortune, might well rejoice within himself; and Pepe did rejoice with all his heart. As he rode down the valley—the valley that is scarred by the railroad now—his thoughts ran back pleasantly over the past few years of hard work in his profession; over his many successes tarnished by not a single serious failure; and still more pleasantly his thoughts ran forward into the future, when all his toil was to receive, over and above a liberal compensation, a most sweet reward. One more deal in the game that he knew so well how to play, and all the stakes would be his. No wonder that Pepe's heart was glad within him; that his soul was filled with joy.

Yet Pancha, left behind in Monterey to wait while Pepe worked, was sorrowful. As sometimes happens to us when we are confronted by the certainty of great happiness, she was possessed by a gloomy sadness that came of dark forebodings in her mind. The very greatness and sureness of this happiness awed her into doubt. She knew that to take her good fortune in this faint-hearted way was not wise in itself, and was not what Pepe would approve; and that she might please

Pepe she berated herself roundly and tried to laugh away her fears—though they scarcely amounted to fears, being but shadowy doubts and unshaped thoughts in which always was a tinge of nameless dread. But scolding herself and laughing at herself were equally unavailing; therefore she betook herself to that refuge which is dear to women the world over, but which especially is dear to women in Roman Catholic lands—the refuge of prayer.

A placid, holy place is the church of San Francisco in Monterey. It stands upon a quiet street, the Calle de San Francisco, where little travel or noise of traffic ever comes, and about it always is an atmosphere of sacred rest. On one side of it is the ruin of the old, old church where, near three hundred years ago, the colonists sent northward by the Conde de Monterey first met within church walls to offer up to God their sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving for the grace shown to them in bringing them within so fair a land. On the other side is the old convent, where long the good Franciscans dwelt, and whence they went forth to save poor heathen souls. The convent is deserted now, but holy memories live on in it, and sanctify its silent, sunny cloister and its still, shady cells. And close beside the convent grows a single stately palm, larger and more beautiful than any other palm in all the country round. The old church is shadowy within, and a faint smell of incense hangs always in the dusky air. The floor is laid in panels of heavy wood, worn smooth by the knees of the five generations which have worshiped there, and beneath each panel is a grave. Reverently do the Mexicans believe that thrice blessed is the rest in death of him who

sleeps within the earth made consecrate by bearing on its breast the house of God.

So it was to this old church, the church of her patron saint, whose name she bore, that Pancha came to pray that Pepe might prosper in his gallant adventure, and that the happiness in store for both of them might not be wrecked by evil chance. To pass from the heat and glare of the April sunshine into the cool, dark church was in itself a refreshment and a rest. Save an old woman or two, slowly and wearily moving from station to station and slowly and wearily at each station repeating her form of prayer, the church was deserted; and in the quiet corner near the chancel rail where Pancha knelt, far away from the mumbling old women, there was a perfect quiet, a holy peace. Her prayer was a little simple prayer: only that the good Saint Francis would keep Pepe safe from all harm, and that the *contrabando* might not be captured, and that she and Pepe might be married as they had planned to be, and might live on in happiness together to a good old age. When she had made her prayer she knelt on for a long while, dreamily thinking of the saint's goodness and of his mighty power to guard and save. And, as she knelt there, gradually faith and hope came back again into her heart, and the conviction grew strong within her that the blessed saint had heard her prayer and had sent to her this comforting for assurance that it should be granted to the full. So at last, heartened and quieted, she came out once more into the April sunshine. Yet even as she left the church there passed before the sun a cloud. Pancha, whose mind was full of happy thoughts, did not perceive this cloud.

That day in Monterey one other heart was troubled, but to it came not peace nor rest. Much to her surprise, Pancha—standing near the causeway over which Pepe gallantly had ridden forth upon his brave adventure, her heart full of love and hope and fear—had felt an arm about her neck, and turning had found Chona by her side. In her tender mood this mark of affection from the friend whom she had deemed lost had moved her greatly, and with little urging she told to Chona the sweet happiness that at last certainly was hers; and wondered to see the look of hate—there could be no mistaking it now—that came flashing into Chona's eyes.

“And he loves a pitiful thing like *you*! Loves *you*, when he might— Go! you are no friend of mine!”

In Chona's voice there was a ring of bitter contempt that lost itself, with the abrupt change, in yet more bitter rage. With an angry push that almost threw Pancha into the water, she turned, sprang up the bank, and disappeared among the trees. So was Pancha made yet more sorrowful, and yet more gladly turned to the holy church for rest and comfort in prayer.

For Chona there was no comfort. Her brain was in a whirl, and in her heart was only wretchedness. The fate had come to her that for months past she had known must be hers; yet now that it actually had overtaken her, she resented it as though it were a sudden and unexpected blow. Against hope she had hoped to win Pepe's love—and now all hope was dead, and she knew that her chance of having him for her very own was lost forever. Still worse was it that the love which she longed for so hungrily should go to another. This was more than she could bear. Pepe's death, she felt,



would have caused her a pain far less poignant—for she herself easily could have died, too. But Pepe lost to her arms, and won to the arms of such a poor, spiritless creature as this Pancha, was an insult that made greater the injury done her a thousand-fold. Her fierce love was turned in a moment to fiercer hate; and from hate is but a single step to revenge.

That night, when the *leñador* came home—and in good spirits, for he had sold his wood well—he told Chona gleefully of the grand project that Pepe had on foot; of the clever scheme by which the customs people were to be tricked; of the fine fortune that surely was coming to the captain of *contrabandistas* now as a fitting culmination of his gallant career.

After her father, with a prodigious yawn, had ended his narration and had betaken himself to sleep, for a long while Chona sat there in the open space before the *jacal* alone with her own thoughts. In the darkness and stillness—for only the low, soft rippling of the water broke in upon the peacefulness of night—the longing for revenge that possessed her slowly took form in her mind. The hours passed swiftly as she brooded upon her wrong and upon the means that she had chosen to compass vengeance. When at last she arose and went into the *jacal*, the morning star shone bright above the twin peaks of the Silla, and the whole mountain stood out sharply, a huge black mass, against the pale light of the eastern sky.

Yet the morning still was young when Chona—her father meanwhile having started with the *burro* for the mountains—went down to the barracks of the *contraresguardo* and asked of the sentinel on duty permission to

speak with the *capitan* Pedro. The sentinel smiled as he dispatched a messenger with her request, and thought what a lucky fellow the *capitan* Pedro was, to be sure.

"Come to me quickly in the Alameda," said Chona, when Pedro had joined her. "I can tell you of a great plan that the smugglers have on foot—and also of a matter very near to your own heart." Without waiting for an answer, she turned sharply and walked rapidly away.

Perceiving that she was much excited, Pedro did not doubt that Chona had information of importance to give him; and his experience had taught him that the treachery of a jealous woman was not a thing that the customs preventive service could afford to despise. To the personal part of her address he did not give a second thought. Without returning to the barracks, he set off at once for the Alameda. The sentinel, lazily watching the two retreating figures, smiled again, and said to himself: "Aha! my little captain is a lucky man to-day!"

It is a good mile from the barracks to the Alameda. Chona covered the distance rapidly. As she entered the ragged pleasure-ground, she turned to make sure that Pedro was following her, and then crossed it quickly and disappeared through a gap in a hedge beyond. When Pedro passed through the gap he found her seated on the ground between the bushy screen and the cane-field that it inclosed. They were remote from all houses, from all curious ears; for the Alameda, being but a forlorn place, has few visitors.

She motioned him to a seat beside her, and said, hurriedly:

"The *capitan* Pepe will bring three great trains of *contrabando* on Friday night into Monterey."

"Yes? He is your lover?"

She flashed her glittering black eyes on him savagely. "It is no affair of yours who my lover may be. But I will tell you this: Pepe is the lover of Tobalito's Pancha—the girl whom you love."

She marked with satisfaction how he winced under her words, the gleam of anger that came into his eyes. But, without giving him time to speak, she went on rapidly to tell of Pepe's plan, and with a clearness and precision that left no room for doubting that she told the truth. Her excitement increased as she spoke. Her black eyes grew blacker as the pupils dilated; her breath came short as her trembling bosom rose and fell irregularly; twice or thrice she pressed her hand upon her heart. As she ended she sprang to her feet and held erect her superb form. Her eyes gleamed with the anger of hate, her hands were clinched, her guardedly low voice quivered with a passionate energy.

"I have betrayed him into your hands, even as he has betrayed my offered love. Take him! Kill him! He has only my hate. And remember, it is he who has won from you Pancha's love. He must die!" In an instant she had plunged into the thicket of canes. For a few moments the rustling of the leaves gave forth a hissing sound as she fleetly pushed her way between them; the sound grew fainter; presently it faded out of hearing, and all was still.

Pedro stood for a while motionless, vacantly staring at the place in the cane-thicket, still marked by the swaying leaves, where she had disappeared. Then slowly he

passed through the gap in the hedge, and slowly walked across the Alameda. When he came to the circle of stone benches he sat down wearily. He did not in the least particular doubt the truth of what Chona had told him : and because he knew so surely that it all was true a great sorrow weighed upon him ; a cruel conflict arose in his heart. Chona had told him too much. Had she told him only of Pepe's plans, her purpose would have been easily gained ; for in a strictly professional and matter-of-course way he would have crushed the smugglers' scheme effectually, and probably the smugglers with it. Chona, judging his nature by her own, had overshot her mark. The very fact that Pepe was Pancha's lover, that his ruin would be her misery, that his death might also be her death, made Pedro—for the first and last time in his life—regard his duty falteringly. For his love for Pancha was so loyal, so unselfish, that even this very love he was ready to sacrifice for her ; ready, for her happiness' sake, to yield her to another's arms. The question that now confronted him was whether or not he could sacrifice for Pancha his honor.

What made this cruel strait in which Pedro found himself crueller still was the certainty that should he save his honor, no one at all (yet it was only Pancha of whom he thought) would believe that in capturing Pepe he had been prompted by any higher motive than revenge. Should Pepe be harmed, Pancha would hate him ; should Pepe be killed—and the chances favored this issue, for Pepe was a man who far rather would die than surrender—Pancha would turn from him in horror, as a loathsome creature too base even to die.

These thoughts went whirling through Pedro's mind, and there came to him no safe issue from his perplexity. Toward whichever of the two paths before him he turned, he saw standing a figure with a drawn sword: Love barred the way of Honor; Honor barred the way of Love.

At last, the conflict still continuing in his breast, he slowly arose from his seat on the stone bench, and slowly walked back into the town; but he took the streets by the hospital and the market-place, thus leaving the *arroyo* of the *ojo de agua* far out of his path. As he entered the barracks the sentinel looked at him curiously. "Oho! there has been a quarrel," he thought. "To quarrel with 'La Reina,' my little captain must be a very great fool!"

The noise and confusion, the loud talking and coarse laughter of the barracks jarred on Pedro, and presently he went out again. Walking without purpose, he retraced unconsciously his steps toward the Alameda. Then, finding of a sudden an object, he walked on rapidly until the shady lanes beyond the Alameda were traversed and he stood at the gate of the Campo Santo. Reverently he entered between the stone pillars of the gateway and stood in the presence of the holy dead.

In a shady corner of the old grave-yard he seated himself upon a stone that had fallen from the wall, and took up again resolutely the problem that he had to solve. There in the perfect peace and stillness, with only the dead about him for witnesses, the great battle of his life was fought and won. His own faith in his manhood came back to him and gave him strength; the doubt and trouble were cast out of his soul; a steadfast

light shone clearly upon the way that he must go. And the silent counselors around him confirmed his choice. By the very utterness of their silence, as it seemed to him, they were as strong voices declaring that Love is but the dying daughter of Time, while Honor is the deathless son of Eternity.

When he stood up, the fight ended, he was very pale, and sweat stood in great drops upon his forehead ; but in every line of his figure was firmness. Erect and steadily—with something of the feeling, as he be-thought him, that had upheld him once when leading his men upon a most desperate charge—he marched between the graves and out again through the gateway. His resolute step was in keeping with his resolute purpose. Love lowered her sword and fell back, conquered. The path of Honor was clear.

Being cheered by her prayer and by the good saint's promise that it should be granted, Pancha went home blithely and with a heart at rest. And further cheer came to her from her mother, the excellent Catalina. By profession, this good Catalina was a *lavandera*. Hers was a vicarious virtue, for, while her washing was endless, its visible results rarely had any perceptible connection with herself. Indeed, it is a fact that the washer-women of Mexico are upheld by so lofty a sense of their duty to their employers that only by the operation of some extraordinary law of chance is it that their own garments ever get washed at all.

Down by the edge of the clear stream, in company with many other washer-women, Catalina practiced her honorable calling, squatted upon the ground, and hav-

ing in front of her a broad, flat stone. On this stone she soaped and rubbed and squeezed each separate garment until her fine knowledge of her art told her that cleanliness had been achieved, and that for the perfecting of her work was needed only copious rinsing in the running stream. Close beside her, always, was a little fire, whereon rested a little boiler; and thence smoke and steam curled up together amid the branches of the overhanging trees. On the low bushes near by were spread the drying clothes; in the middle distance stood out the straw-thatched hut; and beyond, for background, were trees and bushes and huts and half-hidden stone walls. As near her as their perverse spirits would permit them to come were the twins, Antonio and Antonia, scantily clad or not clad at all, usually engaged in some small evil, or else basking like two little brown lizards in the sun. Some day an artist will come to Monterey who will paint Catalina at her work with all her picturesque surroundings; and if he paints the picture well he will thereafter awake to find himself famous.

Pancha, joining this group, and perfecting it by standing erect beside the bubbling boiler, was further cheered by Catalina's confident talk concerning the certainty of Pepe's success. Manuel had stopped at the *jacal* on his way homeward—coming sleepily back from his vigilant duties on the city watch—to leave the good news that a detachment of the *contraresguardo* really had been sent away early that morning toward García—quite in the opposite direction from that whence Pepe would come. There could be no doubt about this assuring fact, for one of his fellow-*serenos*, being

on duty near the barraeks, actually had seen the force depart. So it was clear that the most important part of the promise made to Pepe by his employers had been fulfilled. The other part, the massing of the *rurales* in the wrong place at the critical moment, might now confidently be counted upon—and this made sure that Pepe would accomplish safely his unostentatious yet triumphal entry into Monterey. As became the prospective mother-in-law of the hero of this noble adventure, Catalina greatly rejoiced ; and Pancha, listening to such heartening news, was still more firmly convinced that the good Saint Francis had heard her prayer.

But even while these comforting thoughts upheld the hopes of the watchers in Monterey, Chona's treachery was doing its work. In the early morning of the third day after Pepe's departure there had been a tough fight south of Lampazos—and the end of it was the capture by the *contraresguardo* of one of Pepe's three trains. Broken by a sudden charge, the guard of smugglers was overcome ; one or two were killed, half a dozen were captured, and the rest saved themselves by the speed of their horses and their knowledge of the mountain paths. The men of the *contraresguardo* were jubilant. But there was no joy in the heart of their captain. He had but the cold satisfaction of knowing that he had done his duty—and bitter he had found that duty to do.

When the scattered *burros* had been driven together, and their packs made fast again, the convoy set off southward ; for the capture had been made in the State of Nuevo Leon, and the *contrabando* would be turned



into the custom-house at Monterey. Under the hot sun the train moved slowly along the valley; so slowly that Pedro's horse, outwalking the short-stepping *burros*, carried him far in advance of his command. He was too deeply buried in his own thoughts to perceive his loneliness, and it was only when he reached the town of Salinas that he roused himself and found that his convoy was almost out of sight down the dusty, winding road. On the bluff above the Salinas River he tethered his horse to a tree, and sat down in the shade of the ferryman's hut to wait for his men to overtake him. The *barquero* speedily slunk away; but Pedro, heavy with his own heavy thoughts, took slight notice of his movements, save that he was glad to be left alone.

A quarter of a mile from where he sat the road dipped into a recess behind a shoulder of the mountain, and for a little space was lost to view. He watched the train until it entered this recess, and then, while waiting for it to reappear, he bowed his head upon his hand. His heart was very full of bitterness. There was but little comfort for him in the fact that the train that he had captured had not been commanded by Pepe in person; for he knew that the precautions taken made the capture, either in the mountains or in Monterey, of the other two trains certain; and not less certain was the capture or the killing of Pepe himself. Certainly Pepe's fortune, probably his life, already was as good as forfeited; and with this forfeiture Pancha's hope of happiness was gone! And the cruel part of it all was that Pancha ever must believe that he, willfully, revengefully, because she had kept back from him her love,

had brought upon her this great misery. In the darkness that beset him he saw no way of hopeful light. He had saved his honor, but he had wrecked his heart.

A rattle of rifle-shots snapped short his dismal reverery. As he sprang to his feet he saw a squad of his own people, a dozen or so, galloping up the road, and a moment later four times as many men came out from behind the shoulder of the mountain in sharp pursuit. The pursued were bent low over the necks of their horses; from the crowd of pursuers there came each instant a puff of smoke followed by the sharp crack of the report; and each instant a horse fell, or ran wildly with empty saddle, as the balls went home.

Pedro loosened his revolver in his belt and sprang to his horse. The *barquero* had become visible again, and was standing beside him; on his face was a malicious yet not wholly unkindly grin. "Quick!" he said. "Get into the boat. You yet have time." As an officer of the *contraresguardo* he hated Pedro cordially; but he had no especial wish to see him shot down, now that the smugglers had recaptured the *contrabando* and the fight was won. But Pedro already was mounted, and his horse was headed not toward the river, but toward his men. The *barquero* saw his purpose, and seized his bridle with a strong hand.

"God! Señor Captain, would you ride straight to your death?"

"Let loose, or I shoot!"

Like a flash Pedro's revolver was drawn and cocked, and within an inch of the *barquero's* head.

"You are a fool, a madman! Go!" And the man staggered aside as the horse, bounding forward, sharp

stricken with the spurs, brushed against him, and nearly threw him to the ground.

"*Es mi deber!*" (" 'Tis my duty!") came ringing back through the rush of air as Pedro rode furiously onward; and it seemed to the *barquero*—yet this was so strange a thing that he could not trust his ears—that there was gladness, nay, even triumph, in Pedro's tone.

Whether spoken in sorrow or in hope, certain it is that these were the last words which the *capitan* Pedro spoke on earth.

In Monterey there was no knowledge of the loss and of the gaining back again from the *contraresguardo* of a part of Pepe's treasure; no knowledge that treachery had come in to defeat Pepe's well-laid plans. Therefore, when at last the momentous day arrived, there was with Pepe's friends a glad expectancy and happy hope. Under all, of course, was somewhat of fear that even in the moment of its success failure might come and dash the gallant plan. And because of such dismal doubt, Tobalito's face at times was bereft of its accustomed cheeriness, and for minutes together he would sit silent: the while mechanically polishing the brass number (that, as a *cargador*, he wore upon his breast), as was his wont on the rare occasions when his mind was beset by troublesome thoughts. But these fears, in which, also, the others shared, had no endurance; for all had steady faith in the all-powerfulness of Pepe's lucky star. So, slowly, the day wore on, and at last was lost in night.

Excepting the twins, Antonio and Antonia, no one that night slept in the *jacal*. Tobalito sat before his door and smoked incessantly his corn-husk *cigarritos*.

Beside him, smoking not less vigorously, sat Catalina. A little apart from these was Pancha, holding in her arms the yellow cat. And each of these three minds was so busy with its own thoughts that all of the three tongues were still. Only the yellow cat, having but little mind, and that being soothed into a calm content by Pancha's gentle strokings of her sleek fur, expressed her perfect happiness, and so made talk for the whole party, in a rumbling purr.

From where they sat—although they could not hope to see even the reflected light of the burning *jacal* that was to clear the way for the entry of the *contrabando*—they could see, a hundred yards away, the stone causeway standing out in the light of the young moon against the darkness beyond. Pancha's mind was full of sweet remembrance of the words which Pepe had spoken to her over beyond the causeway, beside the pool, but five little days before, and of the glad future that was bound up in the fulfillment of his hopes. Tobalito and Catalina, being somewhat beyond the age of romance, were thinking not less gladly of the good fortune that was in store for them through the rich son-in-law who had come to lighten the burdens of their old age. No more would the *cargador* bear heavy loadings of other people's goods; no more would the *lavandera* wear her life out in washing other people's clothes. And so all three waited and watched eagerly: straining their ears for the rattle of horses' feet upon the stone-paved streets; straining their eyes to catch the first glimpse of the *burro*-train stealing in from the Zona Libre with its rich load. For close beside them, across the causeway, the train that Pepe himself headed was to pass. Now

and again they caught sight of a little point of flame passing and repassing the farther end of the causeway; and they knew that it was the lantern of the *sereno*, and that Manuel also watched and waited hopefully to see his son, bearing his rich sheaves with him, come gallantly home. All four of these fond hearts were brimming full of love and hope and joy.

Slowly the young moon set. Then, suddenly, Pancha was aroused by a strange confusion: pistol-shots—screams—a rush of horses' feet—oaths—the clash of steel—and on the causeway, dimly seen in the faint light, a confused mass of men and horses and laden *burros* were hurrying away before an orderly mass of horsemen riding in upon them from the east. And, before the full meaning of all this was clear to Pancha's mind, came another rush of horsemen charging down along the causeway from the west. Right under Pancha's eyes Pepe, surrounded by his foes, was fighting for his life; and Pancha knew that the fight was hopeless, and that Pepe's life was lost! Up at the end of the causeway she saw quivering for an instant the light of the *sereno's* lantern; and a vast sorrow for the old man standing there, full of years, yet henceforth to be childless, for the moment overcame the bitter agony in her own heart. But only for a moment. Then, with a cry keen and woful—that echoed along the *arroyo*, and even for an instant made the men pause in their deadly fight—with every drop of her fierce Indian blood aroused and burning in her veins, she sprang to her feet, and but for Tobalito's strong restraining grasp she would have gone to Pepe's aid and died wildly striking

by Pepe's side—as the Aztec women, her brave ancestors, fought and died on the causeways of Anahuac when the cruel Spaniards first came into the land. But Tobarito held her fast—and then a merciful unconsciousness came to give her breaking heart relief.

When life came back to Pancha, she was alone in the *jacal*, save that in one corner lay the twins, Antonio and Antonia, still asleep; and beside them, having fled thither for refuge during the noise and confusion of the fight, was huddled the yellow cat. Within the *jacal* a little candle feebly burned, casting a faint gleam of light through the open doorway out upon the broad, smooth leaves of the banana-tree. There was no sound to break the serene stillness of the night, and, for a little, Pancha half fancied, and tried hard to make herself believe, that she was but awaking from a woful dream. But the searching agony that wrenched her heart was too bitterly real to give a chance for this fond fancy to have play, and then, slowly but strongly, the thought came into her mind that she must go to Pepe; that, if living, she must bear to him words of comfort and of hope; that, if dead, she must cast one last loving look upon his face.

So she passed out into the darkness—for only a faint, hazy light beyond the Mitras showed where the young moon had sunk away behind the mountains—and walked along the path that she and Pepe had trod together but five days before. This time she did not pass beneath the arch of the causeway. Where the path forked she turned to the right and climbed the bank of the *arroyo*, and so came out upon the causeway itself. In the dark-

ness she tripped and nearly fell, and, looking closely, she saw at her feet the body of a man. Resolutely, yet shudderingly, she stooped still closer to see by the faint starlight the dead face, and knew it for the face of one of Pepe's companions. Beside the dead *contrabandista* lay another dead body, clad in the uniform of the *contraresguardo*; and the two lay facing each other as they had fallen in the fight. Beyond were yet others, and a dead horse or two, and a dead *burro*—from which the lading of precious stuffs had been hastily removed—and carbines and swords and pistols were lying where they had fallen from dead hands; for, in the joy of their victory and capture, the *contraresguardo* had wasted no time in bearing away their fallen comrades or in clearing off the field. And Pancha, wofully seeking for Pepe, passed back and forth among the dead.

While she searched thus, she saw coming slowly from the far end of the causeway a little point of light; and presently the old *sereno*, wrapped in his long cloak, stood beside her. In a broken sentence or two he told her that, with Tobalito and Catalina, he had followed the *contraresguardo* to the barracks, and that Pepe was not among the prisoners, and so he had come back to look for him here. Pancha made him no answer in words, but she took his hand and kissed it; and, still holding it, they searched together for the dead one who had been all in all to them in the world. Along the whole length of the causeway they searched, but found him not.

"Yet he is here," said Manuel. "My boy is not a prisoner, and if not a prisoner he surely was struck down in the fight."

And Pancha knew that Manuel spoke truth : Pepe could not be safe and free from harm while all his men were captured or slain.

While they paused midway upon the causeway, standing upon the arch that spans the stream, a low, faint moan sounded through the still night air. The sound came up from the darkness below—from the space beside the pool. Bending together over the edge of the unguarded footway, Manuel held down his lantern so that its light fell into the depth beside the wall and was reflected back in broken rays from the rippling water. Then he moved the lantern slowly, until the light rested upon the bank and shone on Pepe's body stretched upon the ground—on Pepe's face upturned toward them piteously ! And Pepe knew them. Up through the darkness came faintly the words, "Pancha ! Padre !"

When, going very quickly, they passed to the end of the causeway, and so down the bank of the *arroyo* to where he lay, he clasped feebly their hands as they knelt beside him : the lantern throwing a weird, uncertain light upon the three, upon the dark stone wall, upon the dark water of the pool.

"It was a trap, my father ; we were betrayed," he said brokenly. "But we made a brave fight, and I can die without shame."

He felt the quiver that passed through Pancha's body as he spoke.

"Yes, I must die, my Pancha. It is very near. All is ended that we planned—that we planned on this very spot, not yet a little week ago. It is hard, my little one—but—it—must—be." Then he was silent, and



clinked his teeth—this brave Pepe—that his face might not show to Pancha his mortal agony.

Manuel held Pepe's hand and wept: the silent, forlorn weeping of an utterly desolate old man. Pancha could not weep. She clutched Pepe's hand in both of hers, as though forcibly she would hold him back to life. Pepe understood her thought.

"It may not be, my Pancha, my Panchita. It is very, very near now. Give me one little kiss, my heart"—it was almost in a whisper that Pepe spoke—"one little kiss to tell me of your love before I go."

And so, for the first and the last time in her life, Pancha kissed Pepe upon the lips: a kiss in which was all the passionate love that would have been his in the long years to come; a kiss that was worth dying for, if only by dying it could be gained; a kiss that for a moment thrilled Pepe with the fullest, gladdest life that he had ever known—and that, being ended, left him dead.

Then Pancha, kneeling where the holy fathers, far back in the centuries, had sung their *Te Deum laudamus*; kneeling where but five days before her life had been filled with a love so perfect as to be beyond all power of thankfulness in words of praise, looked down upon her dead lover and felt her heart break within her in the utterness of her despair.

Standing amid the dead upon the causeway above, a dim shadow against the starlit sky, was another figure—unperceived by, yet completing, the group below. The arms were raised, half threateningly, half implor-

ingly, and the lithe, vigorous form swayed in unison with the wild throbbings of a heart in which sated hate did mortal battle with outraged love. Chona had conquered; but even in the first flush of her triumph she knew that love and hope and happiness, that everything which makes life worth holding to, had been lost.

## THE TOWN OF THE HOLY CHILDREN.

So full are they of meaning and of music that, at least to stranger hearts and ears, there is a great charm about the names of the towns which the good Fathers long ago founded in this old country of New Spain. That in which Don José dwelt was called La Villa de los Santos Niños—The Town of the Holy Children : and it was so small, and so pervaded by the spirit of peace and restfulness, that its gracious name seemed to have cast over it a lasting spell.

It was a very little town : only a cluster of five or six *adobe* houses, built not around a plaza, as the usual custom is, but bunched together anyhow, beside a tiny church at the end of a narrow lane. The lane went crookedly across the fields—following closely the water-channels, that as much as possible the irrigable land might be spared—for a mile or more, and then opened out upon the highway that led, far across the waves of sand-hills clad with cedar-brush, to the great city of Santa Fé.

Along this lane was the one way of communication between the Town of the Holy Children and the outside world ; and they who traveled it were few. Save the Padre and Don José, only old Máximo, the Padre's

sacristan and servant, and old Pedro, who was at once Don José's factotum and humble friend, ever had journeyed to the capital; and, having visited a place so far away and so magnificent—wherein a bishop dwelt, and also a general—Máximo and Pedro were accorded by their fellows a well-deserved reverence that had an enlarging effect upon their souls. The journeyings of the rest of the townsfolk were confined to jaunts to the other little towns lying round about in cozy nooks among the mountains, or basking in the plentiful sunshine of the broad Rio Grande Valley—Santa Clara, San Pedro, San Carlos, San Juan, San Yldefonso, and so on through the saintly calendar.

Don José had known better days; at least days which would seem better, when judged by the every-day standard of the working world. Once he had been rich. Now he was poor. Yet his riches had not brought him happiness, only vexation of spirit and of body; and now, in his poverty, he had found contentment and peace. To be sure, at times his thoughts would go back longingly to the days when the great *hacienda* in Chihuahua was his; when five hundred *peones* were his also; when in the midst of his great possessions he reigned supreme—as reigned the patriarchs of old. And he would contrast somewhat bitterly this kingdom of his youth with the petty principality that remained to him now that he was grown old; his thousand or so acres of land, of which less than a score of acres were cultivated; his subjects only old Paquito and old Pedro—who managed the one the work of the house, and the other the work of the fields.

But when Don José's thoughts went thus sorrow-

fully astray, Juanita had a way of stepping up softly and kissing him upon a particular little spot upon his cheek, just below the cheek-bone, where his gray whiskers grew thinly—a little spot that she herself had discovered, and that was all her own. And then the wrinkles would disappear from his forehead, the look of longing would fade from his eyes, and he would say, cheerily: “Sí, Juanita; ’sta ’ueno, mi chiquita”—Yes, Juanita; it’s all right, my little one—and his care, with its cause, would be buried once more in the past.

Juanita, who shared Don José’s little kingdom with him, and thus exorcised sorrow from it, was his daughter: and a fairer, more lovable crown princess never reigned!

Don José had lived in the Town of the Holy Children for a long time. Juanita—who looked upon herself as being quite an elderly sort of a person because at the next feast of San Juan she would be eighteen years old—said that he had lived there always. As far back as she remembered anything, she remembered only the surroundings of this village home. Nor could she see that her father in this time had changed in any way. As a little child she remembered him as she still knew him: his tall form bent a little by age, his kindly face framed in a mass of tumbled, curly hair and shaggy beard, which also, being grizzled and streaked with gray, showed the touch of Time. Pedro, seeing more clearly with his old eyes than Juanita saw with her young ones, perceived that Don José in truth had grown older. There was more of gray in his tumbled, curly hair, his shaggy beard was shaggier and grayer

too, and his tall form still more was bowed—as though the burden of the years had grown heavier to bear.

And Pedro could see a much greater change by going back yet a little further—beyond the sad time when the Señora's life ended on the very day that Juanita's life began. He scarcely could believe that the Don José, bowed and gray, whom he served now, was the Don José, erect and still young in his vigorous middle age, whom he served before that great sorrow came. But he kept such thoughts as these to himself. Thus far Juanita had known no sorrows; and old Pedro loved her too well to cast upon the bright morning of her life the shadow of a dark day dead and gone.

Save this change in Don José, that somewhat early had made him an old man, and the lesser changes wrought by the flight of time in those around him, no change at all had come to anything within the Town of the Holy Children in the nearly eighteen years of Juanita's little lifetime. The days drifted by pleasantly. With them came no burden of care, and with them went no burden of regret—for other days as fresh, as beautiful, as full of quiet happiness, ever were ready to take the place of those which were gone.

Juanita found great joy in the glad air and friendly sunshine. And, in their due season, she found not less pleasure in the friendly rains. The red mountains of New Mexico are very beautiful in the rainy time. All the green things, which try so hard, but so vainly, through the dry season, to grow upon their arid flanks, rejoice as the loving rain comes down to comfort them after their nine months' battle with the sun; to give

them strength to live again through the nine months of sunshine that surely will come when the rain is at an end. And the red mountains grow redder, even to purple, as their crests and sides are bathed by the many showers sent down upon them by the kindly clouds. No wonder is it that the Spaniards of old, reverently seeing God in all his works, gave to these red mountains, so nobly beautiful, the name of *El Sangre de Cristo*—The Blood of Christ.

Much of the love that was in Juniata's heart went forth in these great masses of everlasting stone which girded in her home. For the peaks and cañons and beetling cliffs she had special love-names of her own; for they were her close and dear friends. She made stories about them for herself, peopling their purple heights with saints and heroes of the Church, of whom the Padre had told her brave stories—saints and heroes too good for the lower levels of the earth. Chief among these strange loves of hers was the mountain of San Yldefonso, that, ten miles away to the westward, rose sharply from the very center of the valley and outlined its square, battlemented crest in pale gray-blue against the deep turquoise-blue of the sky. In this noble castle, for so she called it—and so, indeed, it seemed to be, so regular and so symmetrical was its shape—dwelt her bravest soldiers and her best-loved saints. She never tired of looking at this mountain down the vista of the fair valley; of fancying that the Rio Grande, glittering in the sunlight between its green banks, while the red mountains of the blood of Christ towered above, was the golden pathway that led to its stately gates; of fancying that down this pathway rode ever noble knights

to the waiting saints who, within the castle, would reward them fitly for their gallant deeds.

Juanita had time and to spare wherein to weave her fancies. In gentle old New Spain there is none of the bustle and toil and vexation of spirit by which the dwellers in less favored portions of the world are wearied in body and cast down in heart; and fancies are very real in this land where life, no longer a burden, seems more than half a pleasant dream. Nor in all New Spain was there a place where fancies wove themselves more readily or in more airy forms than here in this little Town of the Holy Children—where trouble never came, where all was placid happiness and peace.

Yet at last there did come, one day, into La Villa de los Santos Niños a thrill of surprise. The Padre, returning from the great festival of the Corpus, in Santa Fé, brought with him a strange rumor: that the Americanos were coming down again once more from the north—not as they had come long years before, as conquering soldiers, but as railroad-builders; though what a railroad was, not a single man, woman, or child in the Town of the Holy Children, save the Padre himself and Don José, at all could tell. The phrase *ferro-carril*—a rut, a roadway, of iron—was uncouth, strange, incomprehensible. Doubtless, being an invention of the Americanos, this *ferro-carril* was also an invention of the devil. As everybody knew, between the devil and the Americanos the relations were of the closest.

After much pondering upon the matter, in conference with his friend Máximo, this popular view of the matter was presented by Pedro to Don José for con-



firmation. Nor did the explanation that Don José gave at all tend to shake his faith in the satanic genesis of the threatened invasion. On the contrary, the explanation only bred in his mind a hazy concept of a great howling demon, fed on fire and boiling water, that tore across the land at a speed greater than that of a runaway *burro*; greater than that attainable by anything earthly—in a word, of a more prodigious devil than his imagination well could lay hold upon. Therefore he went back to Máximo in fear and trembling, crossing himself vigorously, and fervently praying that the devastating horror which menaced the Town of the Holy Children might be stayed. After this, no one doubted that the *ferro-carril* of the Americanos was altogether devilish and abounding in danger to Christian souls.

Presently the vanguard of the army of invasion arrived. After all, it was not a very formidable army: only a half-dozen engineers for cavalry; an axe-man, a cook, and a couple of teamsters for infantry; while the nearest approach to an artillery train was a Studebaker wagon, in which certain venturesome investigators discovered a few Winchester rifles, stacked handily upon a loading of general stores. To be sure, besides the Winchesters, the army was well provided with formidable revolvers; but these reposed quietly in their holsters, and their wearers, so far from manifesting a warlike disposition, were friendly to a degree. Indeed, the party was made up of brisk, merry young fellows, bent fully as much upon having a good time as upon making surveys, and apparently quite determined to make themselves as agreeable to the Mexicans as possible. Had they not been Americanos, their laudable endeavor to

establish themselves upon a friendly footing in the land certainly would have been successful ; but the conditions of the ease were against them, and their endeavor failed. The memory of the siege of Taos, of the battle and sack of Santa Cruz, of the wreck of their own tiny town, of the fall of Santa Fé, all this still was green in the memory of the dwellers in the Town of the Holy Children—far too green to permit them, being good Mexicans, to make friends of these Americanos, who, for all they knew to the contrary, were the very sons of their old-time foes.

For a time Don José shared this popular sentiment, and had little to do with the railroad men. He had borne his part bravely in that long-past, troublous time. High up on his forehead, just under the edge of his tumbled curly hair, was a gallant scar—the mark of a Texan saber, got as he stood firmly in the breach of the church wall at Taos. As a good soldier, he bore no ill-will to the soldier who had struck him down ; but it was not in human nature that he should feel kindly toward the nation to which that soldier belonged ; toward the people that had conquered his people, and that had left his land bereft and desolate. And therefore it was that while, as became a Mexican gentleman, he was courteous in his dealings with these railroad-building Americanos who had come down across the mountains from the north, he made his dealings with them few, and treated them as strangers, not as friends.

Yet presently, to the horror of old Pedro, his manner toward the invaders changed. It was Don José's fortune—his fate, perhaps—as he rode homeward one day, down the valley, to fall in with a couple of the

American engineers. The young men, full of enthusiasm in their work, and thoroughly convinced that it was destined to regenerate the benighted land in which they were carrying it on, and also charmed with this delightful old fellow, whose manner and whose speech were so pervaded by a courtly elegance, told in uncertain Spanish, but with an earnest energy, of the many benefits to the people and to the country which the building of the railroad surely would bring. They believed heartily what they said, and their faith was infectious. At first Don José listened only for politeness' sake to their glowing description of the coming season of revival, of universal comfort, of the fortunate few who certainly would acquire great wealth. But as they rode on and on, along the dusty road by the river-side, he grew more and more interested in their talk; and presently his dark eyes began to sparkle with an eager light, such as had not shone in them for years; not since the time in his early manhood when he began the grand speculations which were to make him the richest *propietario* in all Mexico—and which ended in leaving him owner of but one little, poor scrap of land.

Again he grew inattentive to their talk; but now not because it did not interest him, but because the spirit of it had entered into the depths of his being and was working great commotion there. The stray phrases which penetrated to his mind—rich farms, successful vineyards, sales of land, new towns, great fortunes, and the like—gave strength to the flights of his own fervid fancy, and filled with a greater eagerness his eager soul. When their roads separated—at the ford at Chamita—he scarcely roused himself to bid the en-

gineers farewell, so earnestly was his mind engaged with the bright future that had opened out before him at the magic spell of their hopeful words.

Don José rode slowly through the ford, slowly along the Santa Fé road to the point where the lane leading to the Town of the Holy Children branched off from it, and slowly down this lane to his home. Outside the little town he met the Padre, setting forth upon a mission of mercy to one lying sick unto death, whose soul was to be purged of the sins of the world that it was about to leave; but Don José rode on, his head bowed upon his breast, and made no answering sign of reverence to the Padre's salute. At the gate of the corral he threw the end of the lariat to old Pedro without a word—though Pedro could not remember a time when the like of this had happened before. Very close friends were old Pedro and his master—much closer than master and man of the Saxon race, howsoever steadfast their good feeling toward each other, ever could hope to be. Pedro, too, had been in the fight at Taos; and in the darkness of night—daring death—he had stolen into the church, and thence had brought Don José from among the dead, and had nursed him back to life. Don José never had forgotten this—until to-day. But to-day Don José's nature seemed to be entirely changed. He even chid old Paquita—who never before had heard from his lips an unkind word—because by some mischance in the cooking she had suffered the *frijoles* to be burned. And, strangest of all, Juanita's kiss for the first time failed to drive the care-wrinkles from his forehead and to bring a gentle light into his brown eyes.—And so began Don José's new prosperity.

From this day onward, instead of shunning the Americanos, Don José paid court to them. He spent much time with them in their camp; he rode out with them while they ran their lines and staked off for construction; he even made them welcome guests at his own home. The engineers were rather flattered by this unexpected tender of friendship; and as it took a practical turn they were well pleased with it. Presents of fresh corn, of toothsome joints of kid, of melons and fruit, came across to their camp on old Pedro's unwilling shoulders, and were very welcome there. And after the rigors of camp food, the meals which Don José gave them, of old Paquita's cooking, were veritable feasts—though, had they known how heartily Paquita hoped that each mouthful would choke them, it is possible that these feasts would have lost a little of their relish.

The standing topic of conversation on all these occasions was the grand season of prosperity that would come when the railroad should be finished and the enterprising people of the North should pour down into the land. Don José never tired of hearing how the railroads of the Americanos were pushed out into desert wastes—only to make the wastes gardens and the deserts populous. If a railroad thus could make a barren country rich, how much richer then, he argued, must it make a country that already was peopled and needed only a market in order to develop abundantly its latent wealth. And the bright vision of his little possessions, fabulously increased in value and sold at a price that would enable him again to own the great *hacienda* down in Chihuahua, ever was before his eyes.

He tried, one day, to make all this plain to old Pedro. But for once Pedro's opinions were very much at variance with those of his master. The upshot of their talk was that Pedro said, very sturdily, that it was better to be poor than to take the devil's money. And, in answer to the objection that the devil had nothing to do with the matter in hand, he expressed his emphatic belief that the league which existed, and which always had existed, between the devil and the Americanos made devil's money and Americanos' money one and the same thing. Pedro's opinions were not many, but such as he had were positive and strong.

About this time Don José fell in with a new acquaintance who pleased him mightily. This was a certain Señor Richards—an Americano, of course—who had drifted down into New Mexico for no particular reason, he said, but for the general purpose of seeing what chances there were for investments in the land that the railroad so soon was to make rich by opening it to the world. His anticipations of coming benefits were broader and more sanguine, even, than those entertained by the engineers; and, therefore, much better suited to Don José's needs. Don José had found the engineers rather lacking in enthusiasm, latterly. He had no cause for complaining of lack of enthusiasm on the part of this new ally—whose flights of hopeful fancy more than matched his own. Where the Mexican saw a promise only of hundreds, the American saw thousands; and when Don José ventured, doubtfully, to speak of thousands, Señor Richards firmly and positively spoke of millions. Indeed, there was no end to the wealth and prosperity that he foretold.

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Nor were his forecasts vague or illusive. They were precise and practical. A land improvement company ; a company for the sale of town lots ; a company that would dig a great irrigating canal, and so bring under ditch thousands of acres of arid land ; a company that would plant vineyards and manufacture wine—these were the more notable of the plans which were to make Don José's level lands in the valley and ragged stretches of hill-side turn at last into gold. Don José's brain was in a whirl with all these fine projects. He could not at all take in their details, and much of their general purpose was more than he could understand ; but their grand result was clear enough to him, and contemplation of it made him glad at heart.

Moreover, he already held in hand an earnest of his riches. The sum of money paid him by the railroad company for the right of way across his lands seemed to him in itself enormous—for in this blessed region all the things which make life comfortable were to be had in plenty ; and money, with which comes sorrow, scarcely was known at all. But Don José did not by any means look upon his money as the seed of unhappiness ; on the contrary, he believed that with its possession happiness had come to him such as he had not known for many long years. In truth, he looked back now with something like contempt upon the placid life that had been his in the past. To be sure, in this past time—since the Señora's death—he had known no real sorrows. He had lived in quiet contentment, drawing from his little herd and from his few fields all that he needed to supply his bodily wants, with enough of overplus to help his humble neighbors in times of dearth—and

being thus liberal with the goods which God had given him, and being also gentle and kindly in his dealings with those about him, he had many friends. But now, in contrast with the life of magnificence that so soon would be his, this simple life that for so long he had been contentedly leading seemed worthless and mean.

By this time Señor Richards had shifted his position from that of a constant visitor to that of a permanent inmate of Don José's home. The two had so much to talk about, so many brilliant schemes to plan and to shape, that they could not afford the time lost in riding backward and forward between the Town of the Holy Children and Española, where Señor Richards had found quarters. So, quite naturally, the American was induced, as a favor to his Mexican friend, to change his abode. Old Pedro's patience was tried sorely by this new move, for he hated the Señor Richards most cordially; but he had found by this time that remonstrance with his master was useless, and so, moodily, he held his peace. With old Paquita the case was different. She was not in the habit of setting a guard upon her lips at any time; and at a time like this least of all. In a fine rage she presented herself to Don José, and freed her mind completely of the burden that rested upon it—of anger that an Americano should be thus received; of conviction that he would repay his debt of hospitality by some hurtful, evil deed. Paquita did not specify what particular evil deed she looked for; but the thought of Juanita, young, beautiful, motherless, was in her heart. Yet Don José was not moved—save to unwonted anger—by this outbreak of rebellion on Paquita's part. Nor did it in anywise affect the



result. Precisely as had been arranged, the Señor Richards came with his few belongings to the house in the Town of the Holy Children and made it his home.

Juanita was the only member of the household, save Don José himself, who regarded complacently this addition to the household's membership. Of late her life had been a lonely one. Engrossed by his many plans for getting rich again, Don José had spared no time for the pleasant, idle talk with Juanita—about her heroes and saints in the castle of San Yldefonso, about her friends the mountains, about her goats and sheep and the *burro*, and such like small matters—in which they both had found much simple happiness in the time that was gone. And being thus cut off from the companionship that had become, though she knew it not, a necessary part of her life, Juanita was more than ready to welcome to her home this stranger; whose presence promised to afford her at least the pleasure and excitement which come with change. From what her father had told her—lacking anybody else to tell it to, for Pedro steadily refused to have part or parcel with the new order of things—she was greatly impressed by the wonderful power that this Americano possessed of making their poverty turn into wealth. To be sure she never had known—until Don José now told her—that she was poor; and wealth was a word altogether strange to her. But it was only natural that the promise of wealth should seem very good to her when she found that its possession meant for her many new gowns and real jewels, much finer than the sham ones worn by Our Lady at Santa Cruz on the day of her festival, and visits to the capital every year for the Corpus and the other

great feasts of the Church. Hundreds of times she had sat upon old Máximo's knee and had listened—with an eager longing that she herself might see it all with her own eyes—to his descriptions of the Corpus and of the many splendors of Santa Fé. No wonder, then, that she looked with reverent admiration upon this Americano, who was to work the change in their fortunes that would put these wondrous and much-hoped-for delights within her grasp. Nor did her admiration of the potent Americano suffer any decrease because he was young and handsome—not handsome as were her own countrymen, but with a fair beauty that was altogether strange to her, and the more attractive because it was thus strange. Presently, in Juanita's day-dreams, the bravest knights in her castle of San Yldefonso also were fair.

While Don José and his friend the Señor Richards talked over their many fine projects for fortune-making, and while Juanita's day-dreams took a shape and color that they never before had known, the work of building the railway went on with a rapidity that, to the easy-going Mexicans, seemed nothing short of miraculous. Although they themselves did the digging and the carting of the earth, the celerity with which the embankments grew, and with which the cuts through the hills were completed, was so prodigious—knowing, as they did, how a whole summer scarcely had sufficed them when they dug the great *acéquia* that watered the hillside above San Pedro—that they were more than ever sure of the existence of the league between the Americanos and the devil. Nor were they well pleased with their work in some other respects. The fields which

they loved, having tilled them all their lives long, and knowing that in the past their fathers had tilled them for centuries, were laid waste as the earthworks grew ; and everywhere their cherished water-courses were divided. Yet, with the tendency of their race to make life a holiday, they found solace for what they deemed their misfortunes in the seemingly vast sums of money paid them by the railroad company for their labor and for their wasted fields. The possession of money was new to them, and they found that it brought them many pleasant things. The traders who came down with wagon-loads of beautiful wares and stuffs from the North did a brisk business ; and every night there was a dance, and every Sunday a *fiesta*, in one or another of the little towns. Nor did these simple prodigals stop in their merry-making to consider that as their money was going as fast as it came, and going only to secure them passing enjoyment, nothing would remain in the end to compensate them for the injury done to their farms—that would remain an injury always.

Don José was the one exception to this improvident rule. He held what had been paid him for his own land, and, under the guidance of the Señor Richards, he added to his little fortune largely. The two made expeditions together down the valley, in advance of the railway workings, and bargained for the land over which the railway was to pass ; and presently sold what they had bought to the railway company at a goodly advance ; for the valley folk had faith in Don José—because of the name for kindness and goodness that he had borne among them for so long a time—and did not question the fairness of the prices which he offered

them ; and the less, because these prices were higher than ever had been paid in the valley for land before.

Señor Richards stated the case to the right-of-way agent of the railroad company in these terse terms : “ We pay ’em a d——d sight more for their land than it’s worth to *them*, and we take all the trouble of dickering for it and squaring the titles ; and then we sell it for a d——d sight less than it’s worth to *you*. It’s what I call a d——d fair and square transaction all around. And, d——n it all, I’m not here for my health, anyway.”

In language less vigorous and more in harmony with the sedate forms of Spanish speech, Señor Richards made this same presentment of the case to Don José ; and urged, besides, that if the great plans which they had in mind were to be realized, it was necessary that they thus should accumulate a working capital. The business that they had in hand was a legitimate business, he said, one in which any honorable gentleman honorably might engage.

At first Don José certainly did not take kindly to this “ legitimate business,” but gradually he suffered himself to be convinced by the arguments of the “ honorable gentleman ” with whom he was associated. And a still stronger argument tending to his conviction was his growing love for the growing mass of silver dollars which he had in store. He had made a hiding-place for his treasure in the clay floor of his sleeping-room, and at night he would dig away the clay that covered it and would sit for hours contemplating it in a dreamy ecstasy, as he pictured to himself the delights which soon now were to be his : how he would be the owner again of the great *hacienda* in Chihuahua ; how

he would live again the free, careless life of his youth ; how once more he would receive the respect and honor that is the due of him who owns broad lands. And, thus richly fancying, he would grow pitiful of himself as he thought of the many years that he had lost, here in this miserable Town of the Holy Children, in a meaningless and ignoble life.

And yet, though he tried to smother it in the depths of his heart, the thought would force itself upon him, now and then, that his wealth was being bought at the cost of certain precious things which wealth, in turn, could never buy. Already his land transactions had brought him the ill-feeling of the valley folk—who, in past times, had known him only by his kindly deeds, and who had felt for him only respect and love. Those whose land he had bought for little and sold for much, as they gradually came to understand the loss that they had suffered, were wroth with him ; and as they told, up and down the valley, of the wrong that he had done them, a sentiment of ill-will against Don José arose that widened and gathered strength from day to day. In the course of his rides abroad he no longer encountered smiling faces and greetings which came warmly from the heart ; the Padre, too, his tried and trusted friend through many years, had drawn away from him ; and even in his own home there was a chilling change. But Don José, filling his mind with thoughts of his great store of dollars, and of the joys which these dollars would buy for him, was able for a long while to hide from himself the dismal truth that, in going out into his new life in search of riches, he had left the love and friendship—precious above all riches—of his old life be-

hind. Yet at last the time came when his mind no longer could keep this secret from his heart.

One day, the Señor Richards being away on an expedition down the valley, concerning some land that they purposed buying, Don José tried to make clear to old Pedro the excellent things which were in store for them all when his plans should be accomplished ; and so sought to justify his acts in his servant's eyes. But Pedro listened but coldly, and refused to be convinced. So the end of their talk was that Don José bade him begone for a stupid old fool. And Pedro, shouldering his clumsy hoe, went down sadly and wearily to his labor in the fields, wondering the while if Don José had thought him so stupid that night, long ago, when he crept in between the camp-fires of the Americanos to the church at Taos and saved his master's life at the risk of his own.

And much this same thought came into Don José's own mind as, his anger cooling, he watched old Pedro slowly and sorrowfully shambling away. For a long time he sat with his head bowed down, while his face grew more and more thoughtful and sad. It is a dreary thing suddenly to realize that the friendship of more than half a lifetime is broken—though the friendship thus riven be only that of master and man, and the friend lost only a clumsy old fellow with no ideas in his thick head save those of duty and love. And Don José, as the thought came full upon him that Pedro—who had saved his life, and who for so many years had served him with a loving loyalty—now no longer was his friend, was very sad at heart.

While he sat thus mournfully musing, Paquita crossed the *patio*; and he noticed, being in the mood to perceive the omissions, that she did not turn, as for so many years had been her wont when she came near her master, to interchange with him the friendly smile that was sure to be the prelude to a little friendly talk. Here, then, was another faithful friend estranged.

He heard Juanita's step in the house and called to her; but when she came out to him her face was grave, and, stopping a little space from where he sat, she asked what he would have her do. She did not come running to him with a laugh and kiss him upon the cheek; and he knew of a sudden that a long, long while had passed since she had given him this sweet caress.

"Dost thou not love me, little one?" he asked; and his heart grew colder and sadder still as, instead of the loving answer that she would have given a year before, she said, simply, "*Sí, Señor,*" but made no motion to come to his half-extended arms. And then, waiting a moment or two respectfully, to know if he had any commands to lay upon her, and finding that he remained silent, Juanita walked quietly away.

As he looked after her, longingly, he marked with surprise how much within the year she had changed. She no longer was a slim slip of a girl, and instead of her light, quick step she walked heavily. In the doorway she paused and half turned, as though irresolute to go or stay, and he saw that her face was flushed with a deep red. For a moment her eyes met his, and the old-time love-light seemed again to shine in them—but it was strangely blended with an expression, half of doubt, half of fear. Yet, before he had time fully to perceive

all this, still less to comprehend it, she turned again, hastily, and was gone.

And thus it was that Don José came to know clearly that the money which he had gained had cost him all the love that was his in the world.

For a while he again sat silent and sorrowful; and then he arose and walked, with something of eagerness, out from the *patio* and across the road into the little chapel. Although living at the very door of this chapel, Don José but rarely entered it. In common with the men of his race generally, he was content that the services of the Church should be discharged for him by his womenkind. But now he turned to the chapel in earnest need, as the one fit place wherein his sorrow for the past might be lost in prayer, and wherein, through the answer to his prayer, might come hope for a better future. The shadowy coolness of the little church, as he entered it and left behind him the glare of sunlight, was comforting to him—soothing him as he would have been soothed by a soft, cool hand laid upon his hot forehead. There was no one in the chapel—he was glad of that—and he sank down upon his knees before the little altar, restfully, as a wanderer finding welcome in a home from which he has gone far astray. As he prayed there, less in words than in thoughts, peace seemed to come back to him, and love entered once more into his heart. The memory of the many placid, happy years which he had passed in the Town of the Holy Children stole softly into his soul, and brought with it a soothing sense of rest; and at the same time came the firm determination that—by the sweet Children's aid, and by the Blessed Virgin's grace—this life again should be



his. And so, at last, he arose from before the altar and went forth once more into the sunlight; and in his heart was happiness.

Don José, a sinner, forgot that sin—though through God's great goodness and mercy it may be forgiven—is a deadly stain that even true repentance can not efface; forgot that, while evil may be stopped at its source, the consequences of evil done must go on and on until through bitter sorrow is accomplished the expiation that Fate inexorably demands.

The Señor Richards, having, with some little trouble, satisfactorily arranged a very promising deal down the valley, came back late in the afternoon to the Town of the Holy Children, to report the transaction to his partner, and to lay out plans for continuing their highly profitable campaign. For private reasons of his own, Señor Richards did not intend to carry on this campaign much longer, and he already had partly mapped out a bold stroke with which he intended to bring it to an end. But that Don José should desire to end it was a possibility that had not occurred to him. Therefore, he was not a little surprised when—in the after-glow of sunset, as the two sat together in the *patio* smoking their *cigarritos*, while the cool wind poured down from the mountains and brought with it a delicious refreshment after the long heat of the day—Don José told him of his changed intentions in regard to the execution of their plans. Don José spoke nervously, almost timidly, for his instinct told him that the Señor Richards could not in the smallest degree comprehend the motives which actuated him in renouncing the fair certainty of

wealth ; and he felt that this friend, who had helped him so well, so disinterestedly, had a just right for complaint in a sudden stoppage of their joint work while its profits yet remained all on one side—for, though the money already in hand might be divided, the great schemes for fortune-making, of which this money was the substantial basis, still remained in the air.

For a little space, while he unfolded his intentions in the slow speech that was habitual with him, the angry light that he expected to see in the eyes of the Señor Richards indeed was there. But as he talked on this light died out, and when he had made an end of his discourse the Americano's face wore a smile—not a pleasant smile, it is true ; nor one easy for a simple-minded man like Don José to understand. However, it seemed to be well meant, for the Señor Richards raised no objections to the dissolution of their partnership. It made no difference to him, he said, whether or not their plans were executed. Other land-owners on the line of the railroad, no doubt, would accept gladly the chance that Don José chose to throw away ; and, if they would not, he did not greatly care. On many accounts, he added, he was disposed to return to the States ; this was but a slow country for an American to make money in ; after all, these plans which they had formed for fortune-making were quite as likely to fail as they were to succeed.

Don José, thinking only of his desire to retreat from his position, did not notice the wide difference between his friend's views now and those which he had expressed that very morning—when he had repeated with emphasis his frequently-urged belief that the very plans

which he now dismissed so airily would assure to them both the speedy acquisition of fabulous wealth. Had Don José perceived this change of front, the thought might have occurred to him, ignorant though he was of the darker side of human nature, that the honorable gentleman his partner, for some reason that might not bear examination, had been aiding him and urging him to build a house of cards.

The proposition that the money should be divided was accepted by the Señor Richards briskly. It had better be done at once, that very night, he said; since Don José had decided to abandon their joint undertaking, he would leave immediately—in fact, by the train that passed Chamita a little after midnight—for the States. In any one else, Don José would have deemed strange such exceedingly prompt action; but in the case of this Americano he had come to know that intention and action usually went hand in hand.

Juanita had been sitting near them while they talked, but neither of them had spoken to her—her father had not even thought of her. Women are looked upon as useful creatures in this part of the world, but they have no part in the serious affairs of men. Now she arose from the bench by the doorway, and, with a sob that startled them both, went into the house hurriedly.

“Ah! the poor little one! She mourns the loss of the Corpus, and the beautiful gowns, and all the fine things which I have promised her,” said Don José. The Señor Richards made no answer in words, but again there appeared upon his face that curious, not pleasant, smile.

The two men went into the house to Don José's

sleeping-room, and Don José—discovering now for the first time its hiding-place to his friend—dug up from the clay floor his hoard of silver dollars and made a fair division of them. He was strongly tempted—little liking the way that he had come by them—to give them all to the American ; but the thought of Juanita restrained him. With such a sum as still was left to him he could give her a marriage portion that would assure her a worthy husband ; he felt that he was old now, and his heart's desire was to see Juanita, the one true treasure of his old age, well settled in life before he died. Therefore he checked his impulse, and, when the Señor Richards had verified his count, he returned his own half of the money to its hiding-place in the clay floor. Señor Richards stood by and watched him—the unpleasant smile again upon his face, though this time it was unseen by Don José—while he filled in the hole and carefully leveled over it the clay.

When the two men separated—for the few hours of sleep which could be caught before the Señor Richards would ride away to take the north-bound train—Don José returned across the dark *patio*. As he passed the door of Juanita's sleeping-room he heard, through the darkness, the sound of bitter sobs. Pushing aside the partly open door, he went to where his daughter lay sorrowing. Very tenderly, for his own heart felt a nameless sorrow that entered into and was a part of his great love for his child, he asked :

“Doth thy little heart suffer, my little one, now that all I foolishly promised thee is lost ?”

But Juanita answered only with a moan, and in the darkness she clasped eagerly her father's hand.

For a long while, stroking her hands soothingly, he sat beside her. But she would not be comforted, and her quivering sobs wrung cruelly his loving heart. At last she said, with such hollow tones of grief in her voice as made it seem the voice of a tormented soul speaking from amid the agonies of hell: "Not now, my father, not now. I must tell thee my sorrow—but wait yet a little time. Leave me for this one night longer with thy dear love, that I had thought already was lost to me; leave me, and let me make to the Mother of Sorrows my prayer."

And Don José, half smiling that so small a grief thus should stir to its very depths Juanita's heart, yet sorrowing because his own folly had brought this grief upon her, kissed gently and lovingly her little tear-wet cheek, and left her alone in the darkness to pray.

Sleep came to Don José slowly. This had been a day of great excitement to him, and his mind was charged with many and conflicting thoughts. He had taken a decisive step that shaped positively his future life. As he believed, he had relinquished wealth that was within his grasp; as he certainly knew, he had accepted comparative poverty as his portion for the remainder of his days. Both his conscience and his heart approved what he had done; yet it was not in human nature, that, after making such a choice, he should not feel some twinges of regret. And a real poignancy was given to his sorrow by the grief that his choice had caused his child. He felt sure, of course, that this little trouble of hers would be cured by time,

and that the life which he had chosen for her was far more likely to bring her happiness than the life which he had rejected ; yet it troubled him to think that any act of his—no matter how temporary her pain, nor how greatly for her good the eventual result—should make in her tender soul so harsh a wound. And underlying all these troubling thoughts, now that his mind was awakened to the change that a year had wrought, was the haunting fear that with the coming of the *Americanos* the restfulness and peace of the Town of the Holy Children had departed, never to return. When at last he slept, his sleep was dreamful and unsound.

Don José was awakened less by a noise than by a presence—by an instinctive feeling that he was not alone, and that deadly peril was near. The room, without windows, was densely dark ; only a faint suggestion of dim, reflected light came in through the open door from the starlit *patio*. Through this slightly luminous space, as he gazed intently, a figure seemed to move ; and a moment later he heard a very slight soft sound, as though a hand were moving over the surface of the clay floor. The sound came from that side of the room where his treasure lay buried, and as his light sleep wholly left him, he knew that he was being robbed. Some one of the many loose characters with which the valley had been infested since the coming of the railway must have guessed that he had money by him, and so had planned this daring theft. In the excitement of the moment, and in the confusion of a mind aroused from sleep, it did not occur to Don José that a robber of this sort would not have the precise knowledge of the interior of his house, nor of the exact spot

where the money lay hidden, that this robber manifestly was in possession of. Indeed, he did not pause to think about the matter at all. Over his head, hanging upon the wall, within easy reach of his hand, was the sword that he had carried so gallantly through the long-past war—the sword that had fallen beside him, when he was struck down in the church at Taos, and that Pedro had brought away, in that dismal night-time, to keep as a precious relic should his brave master die. It was a good sword, and Don José's blood coursed hotly through his veins, as he felt, although he was an old man now, that he still could use it well. With a cry he seized it, sprang to his feet, crossed the room, and made a fierce lunge in the darkness. But his thrust went into the empty air—and before he could recover himself a hand had clutched his throat.

“Hold your noise, you d——d old fool! I don't want to murder you. I only want the money. Keep quiet, and you'll be all right. Make another sound, and I'll choke you!”

Don José did not understand this speech, for the words were English; but he recognized the voice, strained by passion though it was, as the voice of the Señor Richards. But had he fully understood what was said to him, and no matter who the robber had been, he would not have yielded. His old soldierly spirit, long at rest, was aroused again; and it was fiercely strengthened by the sense of the cruel wrong that was being done him by this Americano, whom he had sheltered in his own home, and whom he had made his friend. He cried out as loudly as he could for the grip upon his throat, and he gave one thrust, at least,

with his sword that told. And the ery and the sword-thrust sealed his fate. A revolver cracked, throwing out for an instant a glare of red light into the darkness, and Don José fell back upon the little heap of upturned clay beside his treasure—dead.

As he fell, a gleam of light shone outside the doorway in the *patio*, and then—carrying a lantern, and armed with no better weapon than his big hoe—Pedro rushed into the room; behind him came Paquita, and with her, wild-eyed and fear-stricken, Juanita. The light lasted only for an instant. The revolver cracked again, and Pedro fell dead by the side of Don José. In the war-time of old, often had Pedro prayed that should his master fall, battling fairly with an honorable foe, he might thus fall beside him. But what bitter irony of that prayer it was that they should die together in such a dastard fight as this!

For the instant that the light lasted Juanita's eyes met those of her father's murderer; and even the Señor Richards, who was blessed with a commendable coolness under trying circumstances, trembled, with chilled blood, before that wild look in which were mingled a deadly horror and a desolate despair. Then Pedro's life and the light went out together; and went out also all light from Juanita's forever-darkened soul.

In the darkness the two women heard the murderer move the bodies upon the floor; heard, a little later, the clink of silver—he was not the man to lose the fruit of his work; heard him pass through the door, close beside them, and so across the *patio* to the *corral*, where his horse, ready saddled, stood tethered; heard him mount, and heard the sound, ever lessening, of his



horse's hoofs as he galloped toward the ford in the river, guided by the clear, pale light of the stars. So still was the night that they even heard the splashing of water as he crossed the ford at Chamita. At the same moment sounded shrilly the whistle of the approaching train for the North ; and they knew that to arouse pursuit was useless—for the devil had saved his own.

## THE FLOWER OF DEATH.

GEORGE RAND, of tough New England stock, was as brisk and as capable an engineer as ever held a transit. But with his cool, practical Yankee blood ran another strain. His grandfather, more fortunate than most young Americans of his day, had been sent over seas to make the grand tour; and had vexed sorely the Puritan prejudices of his family by bringing home a Papist wife. The land of her birth never was clearly known in the family, for the respectable New England folk to whom, thus unwarrantably, she had become akin, simply and decidedly refused to have anything to do with her. Therefore, she lived with her husband apart from the world, bore him a child or two, and then, possibly not unwillingly, yielded up the ghost. Her portrait, hanging in the Rand drawing-room—in the old-fashioned house up at the State-House end of the Common, in a private way ceremoniously chained off once a year to the end that its privacy might be kept inviolate—was proof enough that she came from a southern land: a gentle, gracious face of clear olive brown; dark eyes, all fire and tenderness; lips soft and full, on which warm kisses seemed to wait.

As a little boy, Rand fell into the odd habit of wor-

shipping this portrait: not metaphorically but literally. In the doubtful light of dying day, in the warm darkness of summer afternoons when close-bowed shutters barred the sunlight's entrance, he would steal softly into the room and kneel before the picture and make to it strange prayers of his own devising—until one day he was fairly caught in the midst of this irregular, not to say unholy, adoration by his mother. Mrs. Rand was a severely common-sensible young woman, born in Newtonville, who, being fair herself, and holding to sound Congregational doctrine, hated black-haired Papistical women as she hated the personal devil who was an important part of her rigid creed. Therefore, finding her offspring thus engaged, she was not a little horror-stricken: which feeling found characteristic expression upon the person of the offender in a sound spanking. Possibly this form of correction was not precisely suited to the offense that it corrected. But it seemed to have the desired effect. So far as outward and visible worship went, George Rand worshiped his grandmother's portrait no more.

With the years that followed at school and college in the keen New England atmosphere, with yet more years of sternly practical life passed in building railroads in the energetic West, whatever had been moody and whimsical in the boy disappeared. When he was seven or eight-and-twenty, being then back in New England at work on a road that gave him, before it was finished, a couple of years of life in the East, he married: as genuine a love-match, he believed, as ever was made by man. Mrs. Rand the elder was well pleased with this marriage, for her daughter-in-law was a woman after

her own heart: of good Salem stock, clever, wholesome, and, withal, fair to look upon, and having a loving heart. That her lovingness for her husband was deep and genuine there could not be a doubt, and very tender was her husband's love for her—and these loves were yet stronger and yet richer after the boy was born. The marriage was one of those ideal marriages in which respect and trustfulness and feeling of good comradeship unite to make an earnest, lasting love.

Before the baby was a year old, Rand went down to Mexico. It was tough work for him to go, but his going scarcely was a matter of choice. Such a chance as was offered to him was not likely to come twice in a lifetime—not often in an engineer's lifetime did such a chance come once. The tide was turning, and he could not afford to miss so fair an opportunity to take it at the turn. Like the brave woman that she was, his wife gave him brave words of cheer and comforting; bearing her share, and more than her share, of the bitter trial of parting, that his share might be less. So, with great love for her, and cherishing in his heart the loving God-speed with which she had sent him forth, he journeyed downward into the South.

Late day is a very perfect time in Mexico. As the sun sinks behind the mountains, and the glare and heat go after it, cool shadows come forth modestly from where they have been in hiding all day long; and a cool, delicious breeze sweeps down from the mountains comfortingly; and after the weariness of long hours of scorching sunlight there is coolness, and shadiness, and rest.

Then do the house-doors open slowly, one by one, and those who have sought shelter from the heat within the thick clay walls, arouse themselves from sleep and come forth drowsily. Little groups form here and there before the open doors and talk about nothing—with the ease that only a life-long habit of talking about nothing can give. Women pass and repass to and from the spring—or the *acéquia*, if the town is not lucky enough to own a spring—bearing upon one shoulder, gracefully, great water-jars; “oyas,” as they call them in the softened Spanish, that is not of Spain. Thin lines of smoke curl upward from many little fires, and a smell of many *tortillas* cooking comes most cheeringly to the nostrils of a hungry man.

George Rand, standing in front of an *adobe* house, waiting for his supper to be made ready, dwelt upon this slow-going activity and found therein great solace for his soul. It was not new to him, now. In one little town or another, where his headquarters for the time had been, he had known it and greatly relished it each night for the past half year. But custom could not stale for him the charm of this easy-going languorous life; that yet had underlying it lava seas of passionate energy—whence, at any moment, might burst forth storms of raging hatred, or not less raging storms of love.

In some strange way that he could feel, but could not understand, Rand's whole heart went out to these people, whose life and customs and modes of thought, though so unlike those of the people from among whom he came, in very truth seemed those to which he had been born. It was an absurd fancy, of course, but from

the first day that he was in Mexico he had felt not like a stranger, but like one who, having been for long years in foreign lands, at last gladly and thankfully comes home. Each day this feeling had grown stronger, until now it well-nigh wholly possessed his being—frightening him when, as would happen now and then, he realized how utterly he was becoming estranged from his own land. At first he had given play to this queer fancy, taking a humorous pleasure in strengthening it by throwing himself as completely as possible into the life that surrounded him; by seeking to adopt not merely Mexican customs of living but Mexican views of life and modes of thought. And now, when he was beginning to realize how completely his whim, as he had regarded it, had become himself, the way backward was beset with difficulties hard to pass. Moreover, he knew that he was losing his old-time fighting power; that his moral strength was slipping away from him; that he was dropping each day more and more into the very Mexican habit of drifting with the stream.

The only strong ties which bound him to the sterner, higher civilization of which he had been a part, were his wife and child. These still were realities to him; but even these were beginning to grow unreal. Each week came loving letters from his wife, fresh breezes which, for a little space, cleared the warm, enervating atmosphere in which he lived. While the freshness lasted his answers were written. He found that if he suffered more than a day to pass after the letter came, the effort of writing was so great that he had not strength to overcome it. He believed that his love for his wife still was strong and true—yet would he be

startled now and then when he found himself fancying what his life would have been had he not married this fair Saxon woman, but one of these Mexican women whom he now saw around him : whose dark beauty entreated him, and whose Latin-Indian blood was flame. These were not safe thoughts, still less safe were they when from generalities they descended to particulars ; when he came to think how his life might have been shaped had he been born not in Massachusetts but in Chihuahua, had he won not the prettiest girl in Salem but the most beautiful woman in Santa María de la Cañada for his wife. Now the most beautiful woman in Santa María was Joséfa, daughter of the old Mexican in whose house he lived.

Possibly, then, Rand's enjoyment of the awakening life in the village that evening was less wholesome than keen. It was keen, most certainly. Santa María was a mere mite of a village, but it was perfect as a type. Low *adobe* houses straggled around three sides of the treeless plaza ; on the fourth side was the church. Back of the houses lay *corrales* and gardens ; and back of these again the cultivated fields, crossed and recrossed by *acéquias* through which the water came that made fruitful the land. And back of all, towering up grandly, in blue-black masses against the evening sky, the mountains. Rand had seen fifty villages like this since he came into Mexico ; during the two months that he had been quartered there he had seen this very village under precisely these conditions more than fifty times, but his enjoyment of it all was as fresh and full as though that night it all were new to him. But with his enjoyment was blended now a deeper feeling than

that which in the beginning he had known. When he came to it at first, he had loved this simple, placid life with slumberous surroundings purely for itself, for its beauty, for its restfulness; and these, truly, were cause enough for love. But now, half consciously, half unconsciously, his love was less for the life at large than for the single figure that had come to be to him its center and its type. Standing there before the doorway, in the waning light of day, it was of her, rather than of the village and the villagers before him, that he thought.

As he stood thus dreamily, Joséfa came out from the house and stood beside him for a moment, while she told him that his supper was ready. He started as he heard her voice, and as he turned to enter their eyes met full: in his there was a look of longing, of sadness, of doubt; in hers there was a dangerous light, half of defiance, half of strong love confessed. He paused by the doorway that she might pass in before him. As she passed, her warm hand brushed lightly against his.

That Rand should take up his quarters in a Mexican house, instead of in camp, was the outcome of his whim for identifying himself with the Mexican people; with the further and more practical reason that it gave him opportunities for studying Spanish which could be had in no other way. He had imagined that his desire in this direction would be easily gratified, but as he tried to gratify it in one village after another, as his work advanced and his camp moved forward, and failed always, his views concerning household life in Mexico underwent some modifications. Here was a



people, he found, that would not sell the right of entrance into its homes. So he had pretty much abandoned his purpose when, coming to Santa María, he fell in with old Pépe, Joséfa's father.

Pépe, it must be confessed, was a sad old scamp. At all times a very perceptible odor of *mescal* hung about him, and frequently the effects of this potent liquor were visible in the tangled condition of his legs; though it is a notable fact that, save that it finally sent him into a sound sleep, *mescal* had no effect whatever upon his rascally old brain. Between his love of drunkenness and his love of gambling Pépe had a hard time of it, for the demands of these passions for ready money were so constant and so imperative that little was left on which himself and his daughter could live. Things had been somewhat better while Joséfa's mother was alive; but she had been dead for a half-dozen years now, and in this time Pépe had been driving as rapidly as anybody can do anything in Mexico to the dogs. He had sold his cattle one by one, he had sold some of his ground and mortgaged the rest—and he had sold himself. It was this last sale that struck bitterness into Pépe's soul. The sale had not been accomplished at a single stroke. It had come about little by little, ten dollars' worth of him going at one time, five dollars' worth at another—as gambling necessities, or the need for preparation for some especially grand *fiesta* required—until now he found himself bonded for near two hundred dollars; and he knew perfectly well that unless the blessed saints worked a miracle in his behalf he would be a bondsman for all the rest of his days. He also knew, in a general sort of way, that he was

not precisely one of those shining examples of virtue such as the blessed saints are in the habit of selecting to work miracles upon. Therefore his case seemed to be about hopeless.

When this respectable Mexican heard of Rand's quest, he thought with much satisfaction that the saints really were lending him a helping hand; for the fact that all *Americanos* possess inconceivably great wealth was well known to him, and he saw clearly an opportunity for making money to an extent that quite took his breath away. He could not, of course, hope to pay off his bond and be a free man again; but he certainly could get his hand on an amount of hard cash that would assure to him a grand time during the festival of the Corpus Christi, now only a month away. He might even—glorious thought!—go down to the great city of Chihuahua and lie drunk there for a whole week!

Therefore Pépe's heart was as lead within him when Rand, by no means prepossessed by his appearance and address, firmly declined his offer of the freedom of his home. But Rand at last yielded so far as to consent to see the house—and seeing that it was far more habitable than he had been led to suppose by the appearance of its proprietor, and moreover seeing Joséfa, he filled Pépe's heart with joy again by accepting his offer at once. Pépe, who was a shrewd old scoundrel, saw the involuntary look of admiration that Rand cast upon Joséfa, and in his mind he began to evolve a plan. Perhaps he might be a free man again, after all!

Joséfa had no knowledge of this plan, but, had she

been made acquainted with it, she could not have played more directly into her father's hands. For there was for her a rare attraction in this *Americano*, who was so unlike the men of her own race ; in whom, her instinct told her, was a power for passionate love that equaled, if, indeed, it did not exceed, her own. But as time passed on, and the love that she knew—knew better than Rand himself—existed, was not declared, her pride was piqued, and her curiosity was aroused. What manner of man was this, she thought, who, with no lack of opportunity, failed to make plain the feeling that was stirring in his heart ? Under the sun of Mexico never had such man been before ! Therefore was she perplexed, and her own heart was troubled and the more went out to him. And the whole strength of her being was bent upon gaining a return for her love.

Rand was not so dull but that he saw at least a part of this ; and because he saw it, and because he knew how weak he had become, he forced himself to fight against it and to be strong. He called to his aid the steadfast honesty and the love of honor for honor's sake that belonged to him by right of his Saxon blood ; and with these he fought the weakness that his Latin blood had brought him. But his weakness had many strong allies. The strangeness of his life, that was all the stranger because it seemed so familiar to him ; the absence of the bracing moral atmosphere, out of which—even in the roughest of his frontier life in the States—he had never lived ; a climate that filled him with a fuller, richer sense of life than he had ever known : all these forces were allies to his weakness ; all were united to arouse that portion of

his nature which had slumbered ever since he was a boy.

And more than all else, Joséfa wrought upon him strangely and potently. Her dark eyes, alight with fire and tenderness; her clear, olive-brown skin, tinged ruddily with her southern blood; her tall, supple, rounded form wherein were grace and strength, and a vigorous vitality—these characteristics made up a type that was new to him, yet that he felt to be as old as his own being, and a very part of himself. Half unconsciously, he would watch her come and go about the house; and misty memories would rise up in his mind, as though all that he now saw and felt he had seen and felt in some other existence in a time long past. It was like living out a dream, or dreaming vividly of that which he had lived.

For a man constituted as he was, a curious mixture of adverse elements, a dual being in whom were united, not combined, the instincts of two civilizations which must remain irreconcilable to the end of time, the issue of such a conflict as had arisen within his breast was, to a great extent, a matter beyond his own control. His will-power, played upon by antagonistic forces which counterbalanced and neutralized each other, was reduced well-nigh to a negative quantity. A turn of chance would decide the result.

And the turn of chance came that night in Santa María with the touch of Joséfa's hand. Her touch thrilled him. A flush came upon his face. There was a ringing in his ears. There seemed to come a fever into his brain.

She turned as she passed him, and again their eyes met. From his, in the moment, the look of sadness, of doubt, had vanished; but the look of longing, grown passionate, remained. In hers there was a look of triumph in which also were fear and a great tenderness: for she knew that she had conquered at last.

Possibly Pépe had seen this encounter—he had keen eyes, this old villain. Presently he rolled a *cigarrito* deftly, lighted it, and went forth upon the plaza, closing the door behind him as he passed. Night had fallen, and Joséfa had lighted the kerosene-lamp. Rand leaned back in his seat, and slowly filled his pipe and began to smoke. The puffs came fast at first, then slowly and irregularly, then not at all. He was watching Joséfa as she moved about the room, with free, graceful steps, placing the house in order for the night. She did not look at him, for she knew that his eyes were fastened upon her. She grew a little pale, and her breath came quickly.

He looked at her thus for a long while. He could not think coherently. His mind was in such strange confusion that continuity of thought was impossible. His only clear perceptions were of Joséfa's presence and of his consciousness that with the touch of her hand she had confessed her love for him, and that his eyes had told her as plainly as in words that her love was returned. He sat in a sort of trance, motionless, save that his eyes moved as they followed her about the room. There was a fascination upon him that his will, had he exerted it, was powerless to break. But he did not in the least degree exert his will: he was dully conscious of the desire to sit thus silently looking at her

always—in a vague way he felt that ages before he had gazed at her thus; that he was living over again a life that was buried in the depths of the past.

Joséfa drew nearer to him, making a feint of placing straight a picture of San José that hung against the wall, and paused by his side. He saw that she trembled. She did not look at him.

"The Señor is very sad and silent to-night," she said. Her voice was broken. The sound dispelled the charm that held him still. Their eyes met. In a moment he had clasped her in his arms.

"I love you, Joséfa!"

For answer she gave him her lips.

Then the door opened suddenly, and Pépe entered. Rand thrust Joséfa from him, and quicker than thought covered Pépe with his revolver.

"Do not shoot, Señor," said Pépe, calmly. "Come out with me; I have some words to speak."

Still holding his revolver ready for prompt service, Rand followed Pépe out into the night.

"Put away your pistol, Señor. It is my right, but I shall not kill you. You are safe." Then for a little time Pépe was silent. In the dim starlight Rand regarded him doubtingly.

"I am a poor man," he went on, slowly. "I have lost all that I possessed. Worse yet, I am a bond-servant until the money that I owe be paid. Will you pay that money for me, Señor? I beg of you, I pray you to pay it. And I offer you a rich return. Pay it—and Joséfa shall be yours."

Rand shuddered. He felt as men feel who are bargaining with the devil for their own souls. For a time

he was silent. When at last he spoke, it was as men speak who have come close enough to the devil to make bargaining possible.

“Yes, I will pay the debt,” he said.

Poverty is common enough, but squalor is rare, in Mexico. Cleanliness and neatness are two strong Mexican virtues that, finding practical expression, make the meanest *jacales* pleasant to look upon. This rule is the more sharply emphasized by the fact that here and there through the land are found not merely single houses, but whole villages where utter squalor reigns; little communities which in some unaccountable way have lost every vestige of self-respect. Los Muertos—so called because there had been a bloody massacre there by Indians in the long-past time—was one of the exceptions; and so wretched, so forlorn was it, that no great stretch of the imagination was required to believe that it was hopelessly under the spell of its evil name.

Yet the site of the village was very beautiful. Here four cañons met and, merging, made a delectable little cup-like valley dotted here and there with low, rocky hills, between which grew great cottonwoods and pecans, and having broad sweeps of gently undulating land, yellow with fields of barley that rippled in the winds. Along the edges of the dry water-course—tapped at a higher level to supply the *acéquias* which brought water to the fields of grain—were matted masses of cactus in rich red and yellow bloom, and wide coverts made up of little shrubs and tangles of mesquite; and standing sentinel above these lowly things were many palms. Rising solemnly around and over

all were the grand mountains, grave and worshipful. And in the fall of day the sun—through the cañon leading westward—sent long glinting rays of golden light across the golden beauty of the barley-fields and into and under the waving branches of the trees. There are many places beautiful as this in the fair Mexican land.

Los Muertos was no more than a hamlet; a dozen little *adobe* houses clustered irregularly about an open space that was less a plaza than a bit of waste land—where foraging pigs and dogs maintained an armed neutrality, and where sad-hearted *burros* strayed. Standing a little apart was a ruinous chapel, wherein a priest held service at long intervals—yet often enough to satisfy the community's not excessive spiritual needs. Ordinarily, feast-days and Sundays were celebrated in gambling and drinking booths, set up expressly for the observance of these rites; and by evening there usually was a fight or two, and now and then a man was killed. Not much excitement attended these incidental murders. In some odd corner a hole was dug for the dead man's burial, and then things went on as before. There were few men in Los Muertos whose death could be anything but a benefit to the survivors.

A dozen rods or so away from the village, on a bluff above the river-bed, stood what was left of the great house of which the smaller houses once had been the dependencies—for Los Muertos, in its better days, had been a thriving *hacienda*, and the village had been inhabited by the work-people of the estate. Now the land was cut up into small holdings, and the owner of the great house—if it had an owner—had suffered it to fall into



decay. Only a room or two of all the building remained measurably weather-proof. Elsewhere the roof had fallen in, and over the fragments of the fallen roof the unprotected walls were crumbling down. The walls of the *corral* had fallen, also, in places, and in the gaps had been heaped piles of mesquite-brush and cactus. In some of the deserted, roofless rooms, and over the broken walls, cactus plants were growing rankly, their vigorous life marking with greater emphasis the wreck and desolation in the midst of which they grew.

Across the valley, from the cañon on the north toward the cañon on the south, curving around the bases of the little hills, ran the course of the railway; marked by the line of cuts and fills that every day was a little farther advanced. Upon the mountain-side, that the rare luxury of a spring of sweet water might be to the full enjoyed, were the white tents of the contractor and engineers; and clustered around these the queer abodes—wicker huts and shelters of palm thatch and sleeping-places under trees—of the Mexican workers on the grade. In the Mexican part of the camp bits of bright-colored clothing hung around the bushy shelters; women stood beside little fires cooking not unsavory messes in little earthen pots, or boiling clothes in old powder-cans; half-naked children ranged about in amicable companionship with pigs and dogs, and hobbled *burros* went sadly and solemnly from place to place with a motion fit to be likened only to that of automatic kangaroos—and the whole made a picture very good for eyes appreciative of the picturesque to dwell upon.

But Rand, who was in charge of the work, did not

live in the camp. He had taken up his quarters in the ruinous *hacienda*; and with him was Joséfa. Those who had known him only before he came into Mexico would not have known him now. In the year that had passed the whole expression and tone and manner of the man had changed. His briskness and erectness were gone, and in their stead he had acquired a slouching slowness. Grim taciturnity had taken the place of his habit of frank, cheery speech. His eyes, which had been wont to look straight into other men's eyes, were cast downward or raised only in quick, furtive glances; and in his eyes, and over all his face and form, there was an unlifting weight of melancholy. Jim Post, axeman, expressed the sense of the corps in the premises tersely and with precision:

“Looks as if he felt hisself atween hell and high water all the time!”

And, in truth, the life that Rand had led in the half year since he had struck the bargain with Pépe in Santa María had been the life that Jim Post's rough thrust of speech described. The very act of going over the precipice had aroused him—when it was too late—to a partial realization of what he had done; and as time passed on, the deadening of his soul that he had hoped for did not come. His two natures remained in open war, and the more that he sought to crush the one with the other the more steadily the fight went on. His wife's letters, loving, tender, came down to him—and were thorns in his flesh giving him keenest agony. She knew, she could not fail to know, that a change of some sort had come over him; but no suspicion of what the change really was could for a moment enter her faith-

ful heart. She feared that his life was too rough, his work too hard for him, and she begged him to cancel his engagement and come home. She told him of the joy it would be to her to have him with her once again; she told him of her quiet home life; she told him of their boy—and all this gentle lovingness and trustfulness brought infinite bitterness to his soul. Sometimes for days after her letters came he would suffer them to remain unopened, dreading the pain that reading them would give; sometimes he would open them the moment that they arrived, so that the pain might sooner come and go. His answering letters filled her with a strange dread and grief. At times he would write only a few cold words, telling dryly of his work; and then again he would write with despairing tenderness, as a condemned criminal might write on the eve of his execution; and yet again he would write, darkly, mysteriously, in bitter self-reproach of his own unworthiness of her pure love. The strangeness of his moods struck into her warm and steadfast heart a deadly chill.

Joséfa's instinct told her that these letters which came to Rand were in sharp opposition to her love for him. Little by little, questioning him shrewdly, she learned the truth—and hated with a fierce intensity of jealous hate this "Mary" (for she caught the name and held it rankling in her heart) who stood between her and the fullness of love that should be hers; and when, after a fresh letter had come, he turned from her coldly, her jealous hate included him also. More than once she had stood over him as he slept with knife in hand and arm upraised to strike—and had not struck because before the knife could fall the hate in her heart had

changed to love again. For, after all, she thought, the other woman might claim him, but she, Joséfa, possessed him. If this possession should be threatened, then, indeed, the time would come to act; even at her own cost!

Rand did not know that he was living almost in the shadow of death; but, had he known it, his desire would have been only that death might come quickly. For he knew despairingly that he had made his venture, and that he had lost. The ease of life that he had hoped for when he broke out from the civilization that he was born to, and entered the civilization upon which he had a claim by hereditary right, had not come. It had seemed so easy to him, back there in Santa María, to throw off the few remaining bonds that held him to the North and to become of the South utterly; so easy that he half thought the bonds had fallen away of themselves and would not need to be broken at all. But his attempt to break them had shown him how vain the effort was. What he thought was a snapping irrevocable had been but yielding, as a bow yields; and, ever since, by a constant strain, as a bent bow draws against the string, he had been drawn backward toward the life that he had thought forever to leave behind. His very weakness held him from yielding to this strain. He longed to return, but lacked strength to break the bonds that he had bound himself with. Yet he knew that no great access of energy was needed to enable him to be free; and he hoped, as weak men are wont to hope, for the action of some force from without that would arouse him thoroughly, give him full command of his moral strength, and so help him to break away.

And, at last, the shock that he hoped for in his weakness came. It was a telegram—three days old, for the end of the wire still was fifty miles away to the north—telling him that his boy was dead, and his wife so ill that he must come to her at once if he would see her again alive.

“I must leave you, Joséfa. I go from here into the North, to my home.”

She started violently, and then her form grew rigid. There came into her eyes a curious expression that was new to him: a mingling, as it seemed, of hate and love. Without speaking, she waited for his further words.

“You have loved me greatly, Joséfa, far more than I have deserved; now love me yet more by forgetting that you ever have loved me at all. You will go back to your father in Santa María, and you will be the better because I am gone.”

She did not seem to hear him. Her great black eyes opened wide. Presently a blaze of hate shot into them.

“You are going to—to that woman?” she demanded.

“I am going to my wife. She is dying—God help me! she may now be dead.”

“Then I declare that you shall *not* go! You are mine—*mine*, I say. She shall not have you. I would sooner that you should die.” And then breaking suddenly from hate to tenderness, she flung herself upon him and went on, while her whole body quivered with her sobbing: “For you are my heart, my life; you are everything to me; you are all that I have in all the world to love.” Then, flinging from him, and glaring at him with rageful eyes: “I hate her, and I hate you

for loving her. Dare to go a step toward her ! Dare to leave me !—and I will kill you as I would a dog ! She has no right to you now. You have come to me and you are mine. You can not leave me. You shall not leave me. You shall die first—ah ! my heart, tell me that you will not go away. Tell me again that you love me. Give me one little kiss. For I am all yours, and you are all to me.”

Rand paled and trembled. The magnificent splendor of her beauty overwhelmed him as her noble figure towered exalted by her hate, or drooped with an entreating graciousness in her boundless love. That he did not yield to her should be accounted unto him a victory that went far toward atoning for the sin of his first defeat.

Slowly he turned away from her ; slowly passed through the doorway to where his horse stood tethered ; slowly mounted—then, beating his horse’s flanks with his great spurs, dashed at a tremendous gallop across the valley toward the camp of the engineers.

Joséfa knew that his determination was fixed ; that he had gone to make hasty preparations for his journey ; that he would leave her never to return. For this her heart cast all love out of it, and was filled with a bitter, jealous hate. She sat down quietly that she might make her plans for killing him. Yet the more that her mind dwelt upon what had passed and what yet was to come, the more did she feel that mere killing would not satisfy her. Because of her hate of the woman who was taking him from her she required a more exquisite, a more complete revenge. That Rand’s wife had any rights in the premises never once oc-

curred to Joséfa, any more than did the thought that she had done this wife a grievous wrong; for a Mexican woman of Joséfa's class thoroughly believes that great love is a broad and ample justification of all that it may cause. Therefore she hoped for, and presently saw her way clear to, a revenge that would strike both her lover and this other woman who had stolen from her his love.

From before the time of the Spanish conquest there has grown in Mexico a plant that in the ancient tongue was called *tlapatl* in the south, *toloatzin* in the north—names which the softening influence of the mellow Spanish speech has rounded into *toloache*. Through all these ages, even until this present day, this plant has been used by Mexican women when faithlessness in love has bred jealousy, and jealousy, in turn, has bred a longing for revenge. From its flowers and leaves they make a decoction—a little bitter, yet not so bitter but that coffee will disguise it—and who drinks of this decoction surely goes mad. A terrible madness, beginning with failing sight and dizziness; with throbbing pains through all the brain; going on with delirium and strange perversions of sight; with visions which would be laughable but for the dread horror of their cause; with shooting, burning pains in throat and heart; with partial loss of power to breathe, and crushing sense of suffocation. And if the dose is so well gauged that death does not ensue, the pains at last pass away and the end is a violent or a melancholy madness that lasts for months, for years, or through all the remainder of the victim's life. Well have the Span-

iards named this hideous plant *la flor de muerto*—the flower of death.

It was the thought of *toloache* that the devil put into Joséfa's mind. She could not but shudder as the thought came to her. She remembered old Pedro, in Santa María, who wandered about the village more like a wild beast than a man. That her lover, this beautiful *Americano*, should become like that horrified her.

No, she mused, she could not do it. Better that she should die herself. But if she did die? Would it not be what he wanted? Would it not be what that other woman wanted? For her death would but smooth the way for his return to her. With this thought jealous rage came into Joséfa's heart again. Ah! it would be a fine thing for this wife of his to long and long for him, and when at last he came—if ever he found his way to her—to have a madman in her arms! And he need not have been so cruel; surely he might have consented to stay in Mexico. That other woman could not possibly love him as she loved him. No one could love him as she loved him—and Joséfa rocked herself backward and forward as she sat upon the clay floor, and her body shook with the mighty beating of her heart.

"Since he will go, since she will have him, let them take what must come!" she said at last between her teeth. Then she rose from the floor, threw her shawl over her head, and passed out. With long, swinging steps, easy, graceful, the perfect motion of a perfect form, she walked past the village, and on toward the mountains beyond. Rain was beginning to fall, but



Joséfa did not heed the rain. Presently she had entered the southern cañon.

This southern cañon was so narrow, and so high were the mountain walls which made its sides, that there was dusk in its depths save at the very peak of noon. A mile from its mouth it widened a little. Here, from the flanks of the Sierra, at right angles, came out a bastion of rock, its jagged crest dimly outlined through the rain against the gray sky. This rocky wall far overhung its base, and so was made a deep, dark nook into which the sunlight never came. No spring of running water showed itself, but the rock was damp, and so also was the earth at its base. A thick tangle of running vines spread over the wet earth and hung upon the rock above. In the darkest depth of this gloomy place was a great mass of coarse green growth—a repulsive, evil plant that sent forth a faint, offensive odor, and that, as shown by its luxuriant growth, had concentrated in it a vast amount of vigorous loathsome life. From among its thick leaves sprang long trumpet-shaped flowers, pale-white and nearly beautiful, yet with their beauty wholly marred by their coarse strength and odor and sliminess of look. This was the *toloache* of which Joséfa had come in quest.

For a moment she paused, pressing her hand upon her heart; then, firmly, she pushed her way through the thicket of vines and gathered sufficient for her needs of leaves and flowers into a corner of her shawl. With her load well hidden, she walked rapidly through the gloom of the cañon—gloomier now, for with the gray shadows of the rain were joined the darker shad-

ows of falling day—and so across the open fields and through the village to the old house.

As she entered the door, she noticed that the rain had opened in the ruinous walls yet another crack, into which had begun to settle one of the heavy rafters that upheld the thick clay roof. At any other time this sign, most ominous in an *adobe* house, would have alarmed her greatly. There is nothing that a Mexican dreads more than the fall of his roof. And with reason, for if death does not come at once, mercifully, from the crushing weight of the huge rafters, it comes more slowly and more terribly by burial alive beneath the mass of clay. But Joséfa, in her present mood, cared little whether the roof held firm or fell. She lighted a fire under a shed in the *corral* and began the making of the coffee. Beside the coffee, in a like earthen vessel, was the more deadly drink. She was very quiet over it all: for she was resolved that when her revenge was worked, when no good could come to her rival from her death, she would die. This resolution comforted her. She felt that if she were willing to pay her life for what she did she had a right to do it. Yet in her inmost soul she knew that this was not true reasoning, since her life would have no more value to her when her love was gone.

After a while she heard the clatter of a horse's hoofs coming up the stony road along the bluff, and then Rand brought his horse into the *corral*. He had left her, meaning not to come back again, but the need for putting his work in shape to be handled by his subordinate had forced his return. For a moment Joséfa looked up at him questioningly, as the hope leaped into her heart

that he had come back to her in very truth. But his sad, cold, answering look showed her that her hope was vain. So she went on quietly with her preparations, while he lighted a lamp inside the house and settled himself at his work.

Already the decisive step that he had taken had told upon his moral tone. He was beginning to be a man again ; and a feeling not only of horror, but of disgust, was coming over him as he began to realize what his life for the past six months had been. This feeling was intensified as he looked about him at the dwelling in which, for a good part of the time, he had been content to live. It was a hole not fit, even, to be the abiding-place of brutes. The room had been one of the store-rooms of the old *hacienda*, and was windowless. The floor was sunk a couple of feet below the level of the ground outside, and once three steps of clay had led up to the doorway, but these steps now were worn to a broken slope. Shoved into a corner was a pile of refuse, the long-past sweepings of the clay floor ; not recent sweepings, for the floor was foul beyond all words. Over everything—the dirty cots and bedding, the draggled table strewn with unwashed dishes, among which lay a musty brush and comb, the mildewed, greasy camp-stools, the rusty Sibley stove—was an air of squalid foulness incomparably repulsive. In one corner lay a jumble of ill-smelling saddles and saddle-cloths, from amid which, as Rand looked at them, a rat frisked out. One open doorway, doorless, led into an adjoining room, the roof of which already had fallen in and lay a rubbish-heap upon the floor. Another doorway, at the rear, led directly into the *corral*—so

that chickens and pigs came in freely, and brought yet more uncleanness. Of a truth, Rand thought, as his eyes were opened and he perceived the loathsomeness of his surroundings, he had indeed come to feed upon husks and live among swine.

While he sat writing, Joséfa brought him food, and with it coffee. There was a strange look in her eyes that puzzled him; even as he had been puzzled by her silence since his return. Placing the coffee upon the table, but not within reach of his hand, she looked down upon him curiously. In her eyes shone a deep, glowing light, yet over them a shadow seemed to rest and veil their meaning. Slowly she asked :

“Then all is ready, and you go? And when?”

“Now, to-night.”

“And you leave me forever?”

“My poor Joséfa, yes.”

“Ah, well, it is a long journey that you go upon. You need refreshment. Drink,” and she placed the coffee by his side.

Her tone and manner amazed him. As he raised the cup he turned and looked at her.

“Drink,” she said again; while a faint smile hovered on her full, red lips; while a deeper shadow gathered in the strange duskiness of her eyes.

She stood before him in the glory of her perfect womanhood. There was a royal splendor in her form and pose. Her beauty was overpowering. For a moment he could not resist the feeling of intense admiration that swept into his heart. Involuntarily some sign of this feeling shone in his eyes. She saw it in an instant, and the shadow passed from her eyes and left

them bright with the radiance of love. She struck the cup from his hand and fell upon her knees beside him, clasping him close in her soft, strong arms.

"It is all a lie! You will not go! You do love me! Ah, why have you been so cruel?" and with these quick sentences came a flow of the sweet love-names in which Spanish is so rich and English is so poor.

Rand gently unclasped her arms. "No, it is not a lie, my poor little one," he said. "I must go. This is the very truth. Better for you, better for me, it would have been had I never come. But now is the end." There was a grave firmness in his tone that struck dead all hope.

"Yes, now is the end!" echoed Joséfa, slowly. "See," she added, "I give you another cup of coffee. Drink it and then go."

Joséfa's voice had not a tremor in it as she spoke, nor did her hand tremble as she gave him the cup. She stood rigid as a figure carved from stone until he had drained the last drop. Outside the rain was falling as it falls only among the mountains of Mexico. From the southern cañon came the sound of the roaring of a mighty wind.

"Yes," Joséfa repeated, "now is the end!"

She seated herself, as Mexican women are wont to sit, in a huddled bunch upon the floor, her back against the wall. She regarded Rand fixedly, with glittering eyes, while he went on with his writing. There was no sound save the rushing of the rain and the wind's moaning.

At the end of an hour Rand paused in his work and pressed his hand upon his forehead. Joséfa leaned

forward eagerly. He continued his writing, but uneasily—passing his hand across his eyes, resting his head upon his hand, pressing his hand upon his heart, stopping now and then to hold his body erect while he drew in a deep breath. He turned at last and said: “I thirst, Joséfa; give me water.”

“I fear that I am falling into a fever,” he said, as he gave her back the earthen cup empty. “I have a dizzy feeling in my head, and my hands are hot and dry, and there is pain about my heart.”

Joséfa nodded. “I also have a pain about my heart,” she said—but more to herself than to him.

He tried to write again, but presently pushed away the paper from before him. He rose from the table, staggered, and nearly fell; then steadied himself by an arm outstretched against the wall.

“How oddly things dance about! It is very strange!” he murmured. He breathed deeply and laboriously. A spasm of pain distorted his face, and he pressed his hand upon his heart and then upon his throat. “Give me more water, my throat is burning,” he said—but he spoke in English, and Joséfa did not move. She was sitting erect, watching him—her muscles tense, her hands clinched, her teeth set fast, her eyes ablaze with a fierce light. Her revenge had come, and it had brought her a savage joy.

He staggered to the corner of the room where the *olla* rested in its forked stick, and drank a long draught of the cool water. “Ah! it hurts me so to swallow,” he said piteously; but still in English, so that on Joséfa the pitifulness of his words was lost.

After drinking he stood, with the cup in his hand,

leaning against the wall. In a few moments he began to move the cup slowly, and then more rapidly, from side to side, a vacant look upon his face. Presently this gave way to an expression of interest.

“It is like a juggler’s trick. All six of the cups are in the air at once. See how cleverly I catch them! And now here are the rats come to look at the performance. But you must sit quite still, rats; and the short rats must have the front seats. It would be very unfair to give the long rats front seats when they can see perfectly well over the short rats’ shoulders.—No! I will not hold the rod steady. If you can’t get a sight when the rod is moving then you are not fit to run a level. Anyhow, I am not the rod-man, I am the engineer in charge of this corps; and if I choose to wiggle the rod I have a right to do it.—Why, you stupid Mexican, I am pumping. Of course you don’t know what pumping is, for you haven’t a pump in your whole country. But this is the way it’s done, you see. And oh! how fresh and sweet the water is! Give me more of it—more, there is fire in my throat—and oh! the pain! the pain!” and he broke into a moan.

Of all this Joséfa did not understand a word. But Rand’s tone and gestures made clear to her how surely the *toloache* was doing its work—and horror was beginning to possess her as she saw what she had done: for the very hate that was in her was love in its most powerful form. This man was everything in the world to her—and she had brought upon him what was worse than death. And the pain that he suffered: she had not counted upon that. His moaning, drawn from him by his agony, was like a knife in her heart. When

the spasm had passed he spoke again, but now in Spanish :

“Joséfa, my little one, where art thou?” Joséfa’s heart bounded, and she sprang to her feet and moved toward him—and stopped, chilled and woe-struck, as she saw him moving his hands as one searching in the dark; saw that his eyes, in which the love-light that she knew so well had come again, were turned on empty space.

“Come to me, my Pepita,” he went on. “Come to me, my little heart. Yes, thou art very beautiful—and thy beauty is that of which I have dreamed all my life long. Let me kiss thee on thine eyelids, so. Dost thou know, Pépa, that the moment I saw thee—that day when thy father led me to his house—thine eyes seemed to look down into and stir the depths of my heart? I think that it was because of thine eyes that I came to love thee so deeply. For I do love thee; love thee as I never thought that I could love. Give me a kiss, my Pépa, my Chepita, a little kiss, and say that thou also hast love for me. Ah! nestle close to me in my arms, and give thy love for mine. For I love thee— Help! help! Joséfa? I am in torture; my heart is wrenching me to pieces; my throat is on fire; I can not breathe. Help me! I am dying!” And so exquisite was the pain that Rand’s whole body writhed convulsively, and foam gathered upon his lips.

With a cry of anguish not less keen than his, Joséfa caught him in her arms. Had she possessed ten thousand lives she would have given them all, then, that her devil’s work might have been undone. But nothing could undo that work now.



As the pain ebbed again a great weakness came upon him. But for her supporting arms he would have fallen. Half leading him, half carrying him, she placed him upon one of the cots, and knelt upon the floor by his side.

The wind moaned hollowly, and the rain fell upon the clay roof with a muffled, thunderous sound; but Joséfa heard only Rand's wearily drawn breath and sobs, and the wild beating of her own heart.

Resting upon the cot in some measure eased his pain. For a long while he spoke no more. From time to time his legs and arms twitched spasmodically, and his body trembled with the irregular throbbing of his heart. The pupils of his eyes were horribly dilated. There was a convulsive motion of the muscles of his throat.

Joséfa had ceased to think. A numbness had fallen upon her mind that mercifully shut out thought. For more than an hour she remained thus, bending over him, in a sort of stupor. She was aroused by a pattering upon the floor, and, turning, saw a tiny stream of water trickling down from the roof. Her eyes followed along the beam by the side of which the water fell. It was the same beam that she had noticed that evening as she entered the house. In the interval the crack in the wall had widened, and the beam had settled yet more deeply. As she looked she saw the water visibly eating away the clay; she fancied that she could see the beam slowly sinking—and she knew that she was in the awful presence of death.

But death had nothing in it of fear for Joséfa now; and the torturing sorrow that had entered her heart had

driven out her longing for revenge. Her scheme, begot of jealous hate, for sending her lover back to his wife a madman, had lost its charm for her as she had seen the racking pain that its execution had brought upon his dear body—his body that had been her life, her god. Rather than that he should live on, now, though his sharp pain should pass away, better death—and she thought of old Pedro at Santa María, and shuddered. For herself, death could not come too soon.

“Mary, I have come at last; come back to you and the boy.”

Joséfa started at the sound of Rand’s voice, still more at the sound of this hated name. She knew that even in his madness his love no longer was hers. She looked at the beam. The water was melting away the clay beneath it still more rapidly. This time it was not fancy that made her believe that she saw it move. Yet she gazed at it as it slowly sank beneath the crushing weight of the clay above, calmly, sternly. For her there was no more of hope, of sweetness, in life; only in death could she have rest. Death already had laid his hand upon her heart.

“Will you forgive me, Mary? God knows I do not deserve your forgiveness nor your love. But yet be merciful, and take me to your heart again!”

A gush of water burst in, and the crack in the wall became a wide gap into which the beam dropped. The wall tottered. There was a sound of grinding, rending wood, as the light canes above the rafters, on which the clay rested, were wrenched and broken. Masses of clay fell upon the floor. Joséfa’s body remained motionless, rigid; her eyes were fixed steadfastly upon the wreck,

and in them was a look of lonely longing, of harsh despair. Half unconsciously, in her bitter searching for some faint sign of sympathy in her desolate strait, she clasped Rand's hand in hers. As he felt the touch his face brightened.

“Ah! you do forgive me, Mary! I swear to you that for the sin which I have wrought, against you and before God, the atonement shall go on through all the coming years. In all my life to come, only for you—”

Slowly the wall fell outward. With a crash the roof came down!

## A MEXICAN NIGHT.

### I.

It was one of those warm, murky nights which come in the City of Mexico at the season when the rains begin. A bank of heavy clouds in which faint flashes of lightning gleamed hung low over the hills of Tepeyac—where is the shrine of the blessed Virgin of Guadalupe—and now and then an eddy of wind would suck away a scrap of this cloud-bank, whirl it over the city, and there empty it suddenly in a gush and tumult of thunderous rain. The watchmen swore great mouth-filling Spanish oaths as these drenching down-pours burst out from the black sky. The braver of them betook themselves to the shelter of deep doorways. The more timorous staid at their posts and accepted their duckings with a solemn resignation—preferring the certain wet wrath of heaven to the possible scorching wrath of the Conde de Revillagigedo : that devil of a Viceroy whose whole life seemed to be devoted to ferreting out, and thereafter punishing in a quaint but most stinging fashion, the lightest misdeeds of honest men. A pretty pass things had come to, muttered these pluvial martyrs, when a watchman might not settle himself on a drenching night for forty winks in a friendly doorway without the chance of being aroused at his twentieth wink by a per-

sonal kicking by the Viceroyal foot, and Heaven only knew what to follow in the way of extraordinary expiation the next day ! Better, a thousand times better, the happy time when the viceroys of his Catholic Majesty in New Spain had kept their beds o' nights, and had been content to govern without attempting to rule !

Between the showers soft waves of warm air came gently from out the languid bosom of the night, tearing aside the less dense clouds to the southward, and so revealing a wan point of light where a gibbous moon just showed above the rounded crest of Ajusco. Then strange shadows would move through the streets in the long reaches between the lamps—whereof the yellow flames were faint and fitful as their untrimmed wicks burned low—and strange, murmurous noises were born of the sighing of the wind that well might be the sighings of souls set free from earth but which in heaven had found no home.

Seeing these whirling shadows and hearing these sobbing murmurs, the watchmen crossed themselves and looked now and again over their shoulders fearfully. For, truly, it was on nights such as this that the blessed saints forgot for a while to guard the city, and the dark powers of evil had full sway. At any moment, as the watchmen knew, might come dashing around the corner the Vaca de Lumbre ; that devilish, fire-breathing cow which came out from the *potrero* of San Sebastian and went galloping through the streets, wrapped in an unholy halo of hell-fire and belching forth smoke and sparks and living flames, until the crowing of the cocks sent her scampering back to the infernal pit where she belonged. Or La Ilorona, The Weeper, might be abroad, shrieking for her lost children : and whoso was

luckless enough to cross her path died at the touch of her icy breath in chill and biting pain. Or, worst of all, the terrible Don Juan Manuel, sinner above all sinners, might come along—quietly wrapped in his cloak and looking as respectable as the Viceroy himself—and ask, as any man might ask: “What is the hour of the night?” Nor would the watchman answering him, as any watchman might answer, “It is two of the clock,” or whatever the hour might be, know that he was dealing not with a living mortal but with a damned soul, until he heard Don Juan Manuel’s reply, “Fortunate art thou above all men, for thou knowest precisely the hour of thy death”—and then the knowledge would come too late to be of any practical value! In the morning, on the very spot where Don Juan Manuel had met him, that watchman—or it might be a man not a watchman—would be found dead; and on his dead face would be a look of horror fit to freeze one’s blood at thought of what his dying eyes had seen.

Hardy indeed were the *serenos* who at that time kept the night-watch of the City of Mexico: braving supernatural visitations, from the dread penalties of which even a prompt appeal to the protecting grace of the blessed saints might not always save them; braving the visitations of a far too prying and inquisitive Viceroy, from whose award of penalty for keeping lax watch there was no salvation of any kind at all!

## II.

BUT one man there was that night of the city watch who took no thought of the drenching rain, who

felt no fear of the strange movements of the stealthy shadows, and in whose sorrow-burdened heart was a dull rage against his evil destiny that made him careless of the saving grace of heaven and defiant of the blighting powers of hell. With the sweet fountain of his life embittered at its very source, what did he care for any further ill that Fate might have in store for him ?

Yet less than six hours had passed since this sorrowful Pancho Brazo had believed himself to be the very happiest man in the whole city of Mexico ; had believed that the happiest home in that whole city was his own home : the tiny house of two rooms wherein he dwelt with his beautiful wife Belita, in the Callejon de los Pajaritos—the Little Street of the Little Birds.

It was a marriage made in heaven, the neighbors said, when this brisk Pancho, the *sereno*, married the lovely Belita, daughter of old Rafael the *cargador*. Belita was known to be as good and as modest as she was beautiful ; and this was saying much, for she was so very beautiful that strangers who saw her for the first time usually drew a long breath as they gazed upon her ; and some had been known to pinch themselves, to make sure that what they saw was not the wonderful creation of a dream. As for Pancho—a most gallant young fellow for whom half the women in the quarter where he lived went sighing—there was not a better man in all the city watch, nor one more certain soon to be raised to the commanding rank of sergeant in just reward of faithfulness and zeal. It was known, moreover, that because of his love for Belita he had become a very miser. Even before his marriage he had saved a wonderful store of dollars, of which every single one had

been laid away in her name: for the dearest wish of his heart was to be able, when his promotion came and he should be a person of some consequence in the community, to buy for her a little house with a garden around it that should be altogether their very own. Within the small kingdom that he thus hoped to win for her she would be, he told her, wholly a queen.

Therefore, the wedding was a most happy one; attended by many of Pancho's comrades of the city watch, and by many respectable *cargadores* and *aquadores*, with their wives, the friends of old Rafael. And after the marriage ceremony, in the parish church of San José, there was a great feast at the Fonda de las Damas—whereat *pulque* and good wishes were poured out unstintedly; and whereat, also, good-natured jokes were cracked which made the beautiful Belita blush entrancingly to the very tips of her lovely little ears.

It is but just to add that in all the gossip that attended upon this wedding Chucha Guerra was the only person who said a single spiteful word. Chucha, to be sure, said not only one but many spiteful words; but people only smiled when they heard them, for it was well known throughout the quarter that Chucha long had hoped that she, not Belita, would be Pancho's bride. And it was said, also, in extenuation of Chucha's bitterness, that perhaps Pancho had not treated her very well.

The home in the Little Street of the Little Birds, whereto these married lovers went to dwell, small though it was, was as full of happiness as though it had been the whole of the Viceroyal Palace over on the Plaza Mayor. In a modest way it also was elegant. A



bed, and four rush-bottomed chairs, and a table, were Belita's handsome marriage portion; from her aunt—the wife of the rich dealer in charcoal—came the beautiful picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe in its gilded frame; she herself had bought the surprising array of toy pots and pans wherewith the wall facing the front door most tastefully was adorned. It was a pleasure to the passers-by to look in at this front door and so to see how excellent was everything within. It was the tidiest house in all the quarter; and smells came from it at cooking-time fit to stir up unruly desires in the stomach of the blessed St. Anthony!

Belita's heart was set not less strongly than was Pancho's upon realizing the golden hope of owning the house with a garden, and therein being a very queen. They had already chosen their future kingdom—a little house just beyond the Gate of Belen, on the *calzada* that led out to the church of La Piedad. Of a Sunday they would go together down past the Salto del Agua and the Arcos de Belen, and so through the *Garita* and along the causeway until they came to this blissful and beautiful dwelling that they were highly resolved should be their home. This also was a house of two rooms only; but it stood in the midst of a garden that was nearly forty *varas* square—a garden of fat, black soil that would grow the most ravishing radishes and lettuces, and that had in its midst an apricot-tree, and beside its *adobe* wall a rare cluster of pomegranates. Separating this estate from the causeway was a wide *acéquia*, whence could be had freely all the water that the garden would require; and in the *acéquia* grew calla-lilies beautiful to behold.

It was true that the little house was in a most ruinous condition; that the garden wall was falling in a dozen places; that the *acéquia*, save where the lilies grew, was choked with weeds; but precisely because their kingdom thus was ragged and out of elbows and down at heel did they rejoice. In its ruinous condition no one was likely to buy it; and its rich owner—who had taken it for a bad debt, and who did not care a button whether or not a buyer for it were found—declined to throw good money after bad by making repairs merely on the chance that when it was put in order it might be sold. Therefore had Pancho and Belita the well-grounded hope that no purchaser would appear before their store of dollars reached the modest figure that would suffice to make it their own. As they stood on the *calzada*, Sunday after Sunday, with hands clasped, in rapturous contemplation of this most precious piece of property they planned, and planned again, how they would restore and beautify it when it should belong wholly and absolutely to them alone.

So the weeks and the months flitted by cheerily in the house in the Little Street of the Little Birds. The hoard of dollars steadily grew larger; Pancho's speedy promotion to be a sergeant had been as good as promised to him; the happy future that they longed for was very near at hand; and through the time that they waited for yet greater happiness to come to them the lives of these fortunate young people were gladdened constantly by the sweet and sustaining comfort of a very perfect love.

## III.

BUT as Pancho stood watch that murky June night—while the blustering torrents which swept out from the cloud-bank above the hills of Tepeyac drenched him to the skin, and the soft warm wind was full of murmurous breathings as of lost souls, and the shadows cast by the pale moonlight were as animate monsters—there was no room for dread of any supernatural danger within his sorrow-laden heart. All his thought was concentrated upon a very terrible danger of an earthly sort that menaced him; a danger whereof the verity had been proved to him beyond a peradventure, and that must bring him throughout the remainder of his days the open scorn of his enemies and the half-contemptuous pity of his friends.

It was to Chucha that Pancho owed his knowledge of the calamity that had overtaken him in the midst of his happiness and that in an instant had turned the sweetness of his life to gall. She was a handsome girl, this Chucha; but hers was so shrewish a temper—as Pancho quickly discovered in the days when he had made a little love to her—that no man could be found brave enough, for all her good looks, to take the hazard of making her his wife; which fact, as time and the passing away of lovers impressed it upon her, made her nature yet sourer and gave a keener edge to her sharp tongue.

It was this Chucha, then, who had stopped him that very evening on his way from his home to the watch-house of his quarter, and who without wasting a

word in greeting had said harshly: "And thou art fool enough, Pancho Brazo, to think that through these long nights whilst thou art absent thy beautiful Belita remains alone!"

It was as though a knife had been thrust into his heart when Pancho heard these words. He turned pale and staggered back until he found support against a wall. Then the blood that had retreated for a moment to his heart surged forth again through his veins hotly and he answered: "Thou liest!"

Chucha smiled contemptuously. "Ah, these men!" she said. "How sure they always are of the faithfulness of their own wives! How sure they always are of all other wives that beauty and faithlessness never fail to go hand in hand!"

Pancho grasped her arm so strongly that she gave a little cry of pain. "Prove the truth of thy wicked words, or I will kill thee!" he said.

"What matter if thou dost kill me?" she answered. "Long ago thou didst kill my love. But the proof that thou desirest is easy to give thee. Come with me."

Pancho followed her along the street, and so into the room that she inhabited in a house not a stone's cast from his own. This room was on the ground floor, and the window that opened upon the street was protected after the Mexican fashion by a heavy grating of iron. Having drawn close the inside wooden shutters, yet not so close but that there remained a crack ample to spy through, Chucha beckoned him to the window. "Stand here and watch," she said. "Presently thou wilt see all that thou needest to confirm my words."

Had not the whole matter been sprung upon him

with a suddenness that gave him no time for reflection, Pancho might have thought twice before consenting thus to act the spy upon his own wife—and especially under Chucha's eyes. As he placed himself so that he could look out through the crack in the shutters his conscience twinged him because of the part that he was playing; yet but lightly, for dread and rage still filled his heart. In a moment he heard the door behind him open; and as he turned quickly he saw Chucha, bearing a bundle on her arm, just leaving the room. He had not expected from her such consideration. It would have been more in keeping with what he believed to be her character had she remained to exult over him when the proof that she had promised should be forthcoming and he should be compelled to admit that her words were true.

Dusk had fallen upon the city, but not darkness. Even at a short distance, while figures easily were distinguished, faces were blurred and not recognizable. For ten minutes Pancho stood at his post and watched fruitlessly. As he thus waited, inactive, his anger cooled and his reason slowly returned to him. Then shame of his traitorous spying took hold upon him. It was a cruel wrong that he was doing his wife, he felt, thus to doubt her on no surer ground than that of the lying Chucha's word; it was both absurd and wicked to doubt Belita on any ground at all—and as these honorable thoughts framed themselves in his mind he turned to abandon his place at the window, gravely angry with himself because he had yielded to Chucha's evil wishes so easily and so far.

But in the very moment that he turned from his

post of observation he saw that which irresistibly drew his eyes back again to the crack in the shutters; that made a great lump come up into his throat, and that sent through his heart a chill and biting pain. At the door of his own house, over there across the street, stood a shadowy figure wrapped in a long cloak; that it was the figure of a man, of a gentleman, was unmistakable because of the broad hat surmounted by a waving plume.

The man paused for a moment and seemed to gaze furtively up and down the street. Then, apparently satisfied that the coast was clear, he tapped thrice lightly against the door. The door was not opened; but from the position of his head—slightly bent, and closely approached to the key-hole—it was evident that he was carrying on a conversation with whoever was on the other side: and the only person who possibly could be on the other side of that door, as the miserable Pancho but too well knew, was his own wife! The conversation was a very short one; and then, greatly to Pancho's astonishment—for he had expected that the affair would have a widely different ending—the man stepped back, blew a kiss from the tips of his fingers toward the door, and so came away. He walked briskly down the street, on its opposite side, directly past the window behind which Pancho stood. His head was bowed a little, so that the brim of his hat concealed his face. He was a small man, wearing a long, gray cloak, and a brown hat in which was a green plume.

Pancho made but two bounds from the window to the door. His only thought was of hot pursuit and bloody vengeance. He raised the latch, but the door

would not open—it was locked ! The iron grating of the window was as strong as the grating of a jail. He let loose a tornado of curses as he realized the trick that Chucha had put upon him in leaving him thus a prisoner, and in his raving rage he beat against the door with his feet and fists—and made no more impression against its solid timbers than he would have made by beating against a wall of stone. At last, his rage having a little spent itself in his furious violence, he resigned himself to awaiting Chucha's return. What he would do, the moment that he was set free, was perfectly clear to him : he would walk across the street and kill his wife. Later, perhaps, he might be fortunate enough to find her lover and kill him also.

After what seemed to him to be a very long while, the door opened and Chucha entered.

“ Well,” she asked, “ what hast thou seen ? ”

Pancho was silent.

“ Did her lover come—the little gentleman of the court, with a brown hat and a green feather ? ”

“ Then thou also didst see him ? ”

“ I ? I have seen nothing—nothing, that is, to-night. But I have seen much on other nights—it is an old affair, thou stupid one. Tell me what thou didst see ? ”

When he had told her, stumbling in his words and freighting them with a load of heavy curses, she answered slowly and reflectively : “ Yes, it sometimes happens in this way. He comes ; says a word or two to her through the closed door ; blows a kiss of farewell toward her, and then away he goes. I do not understand it, but so it is. These gentlemen of the

court have customs of their own. But it is seldom that he thus leaves her. Usually the door opens when he taps. It is far in the night when he departs.

For answer, Pancho ground his teeth.

"Thou poor Pancho!" she continued, and in her tone there was a touch of very genuine tenderness. "It is cruel that such a wife as this shouldst have been given thee, when thou mightst have had one who would have loved thee truly and faithfully all thy life long. Even yet, Pancho—" She stopped short and looked at him. There could be no mistaking the meaning that was in Chucha's eyes.

As she moved a step toward him he turned abruptly from her and placed his hand upon the latch. "Talk not to me of faithful love of woman!" he cried. "Since thou hast proved to me that Belita is false, I know that not one woman in all the world is true. Now I am going over there to kill her. Be thankful that first I do not kill thee. Death is what thou deservest because of thy black heart!" He spoke very calmly; but it was the calmness of a glowing rage.

Chucha also spoke calmly. "It is well enough to kill Belita," she said; "but if thou shouldst kill her now, her lover will escape thy vengeance. Let her live on to lure him back again, so that thy work may be complete. Wait until another night shall bring him to her door; and then, when he has entered, follow thou and kill them both!"

Pancho stood for some instants silent and irresolute. Then, as he turned toward the door again, he said, slowly, but with a bitter earnestness: "Thou daughter of the devil, I shall take thy counsel!"



She stepped quickly in front of him. "Wilt thou not kiss me, Pancho—only one little kiss—before thou goest?"

He thrust her aside savagely. "To hell with thee, where thou belongest—and may I never set eyes on thee again until my meeting with thee there shall be a part of my punishment for the sin that, because of thee, I shall do!" He tore the door open, and so was gone.

#### IV.

No wonder was it, then, as Pancho stood his watch in the deserted streets that strange June night so full of evil and of dread, that Heaven's grace seemed hopelessly far away from him; that he was defiant of the powers of darkness because already they had done their worst. Welcome to him, he thought, would be the icy breath of *La Llorona* bringing the chill pain of death; welcome even would be the gaunt specter of Don Juan Manuel, killing with that nameless horror whereof only awful hints were given in wide-open and distraught dead eyes.

Yet in truth—because the natural body of man cherishes the life that is in it even while that life longs only to be quit of its load of earthly flesh—a shiver ran through Pancho's frame as a voice sounded suddenly in his ears, and, turning quickly, he saw a man standing at his side. Whence this man had come he could not tell. Save a low growl of thunder that had followed close upon a livid flash in the cloud-bank above the hills of *Tepcayae*, he had heard no sound until this voice demanded: "What is the hour of the night?" At the same instant there came faintly through the warm, moist air the mid-

night chiming of the clock upon the Palace; and with this, in yet fainter tones, the chiming of the clock in the distant Calle de Reloj.

Pancho's fear, born of his body, lasted only for a moment. Then his strong spirit, made desperate by its burden of hopeless sorrow, asserted its full strength. Drawing himself up as though on parade, he answered firmly: "It is midnight, Don Juan Manuel—when thou, with others like thee of the damned, art loosed from hell! Now thou seest that I fear not to tell thee the hour of my death. Kill me quickly; but know that for once thou hast failed in thy devil-sent mission—because for me life is all sorrow and death is joy!"

That which Pancho expected instantly—that strange sensation, whatever it may be, which marks the change when mortals put on immortality—did not come to him. Nor did Don Juan Manuel (there was no room for doubting that this was Don Juan Manuel) immediately make answer to his desperate deliverance. In the pause that followed there was a brighter flash of lightning in the sky directly above them, followed by a crash of thunder that shook the ground beneath their feet. A few great drops of rain fell: heralding the advance of the deluge that was sweeping toward them with a hissing sound, as though winged serpents battled in the upper reaches of the night. Don Juan Manuel pulled down over his brow the broad brim of his plumed hat, and buried his face still more deeply in the mufflings of his cloak. His head was bowed a little, and his form relaxed, as though he pondered some deep thought. When the gush of rain burst upon them he gave no sign of heeding it, save to draw a long breath, as though of

satisfaction : a not unnatural feeling, Pancho thought, in the case of one coming from the blazing region where he belonged—and half expected to see the rain-drops leap away from him in steam.

At last Don Juan Manuel raised his head and spoke. “My son,” he said—and then a great crash of thunder drowned his words. As the peal died away in rumbling reverberations among the clouds he went on, as calmly as though no interruption had occurred—“I am not wholly a thing of evil. Remember the love that was in my heart for the nephew whom I was constrained to kill. Remember the penance that I did, whereby was partly purged my soul. There still is left to me the power to sympathize in human sorrow. Tell me of this sharp grief of thine that, in the very bloom and morning of thy life, makes thee cry longingly for death.”

There was another fierce gleam of lightning and furious crash of thunder as Don Juan Manuel ended this strange address. The rain poured down as though whole oceans had been caught up and loosed above them in the deep bosom of the inky sky. Beneath their feet the solid earth trembled. The very elements seemed to be dissolving into space before a mighty and a roaring wind.

The fury and the wonder and the horror of it all half turned Pancho’s brain. He laughed aloud. “Truly, Señor Devil Don Juan Manuel,” he cried, “I will tell thee, and gladly. Why should I not? It is but telling thee a little sooner the story that thou wilt hear when I go down, as soon I must, red-handed to join thee in thy home in hell. Thou seemest, in thy way, to be a kindly devil. Listen, then, and know once more—for

many such tales must thou have heard from the souls of men in torment midst thy endless fires—what crimes are done when faith is turned to faithlessness and righteous hate avenges outraged love.”

And then—his soul racked with agony as his grief grew yet more poignant by taking firmer shape in words, in the crash of dashing rain and volleying thunder, beneath a sky that seemed aflame with all the fires of hell—Pancho told to Don Juan Manuel the whole of his miserable story, from the joy of its beginning to the bitter, deadly sorrow of its despairing end.

Not one detail did he spare himself. All the glad hopes which had filled his soul were set forth: of his promotion to be a sergeant; of the little house with the garden; of his life of happiness in that little kingdom where Belita would be queen. And then he told of the black woe that had come to him in Chucha's spoken words; in what from Chucha's window, with his own eyes, he had seen.

Had he been Chucha's lover? Don Juan interrupted. Yes, in a way, he answered, and told shortly what his light love-making had been, and how she had sought, in the very midst of his sorrow, to win his love again by her bold looks and words.

And then he added, in words which showed how fiercely in his heart burned the strong fire of deadly hate, that Belita—and, if luck served him, her lover also—would die that coming night by his avenging hand. “And so it will be, Señor Devil Don Juan Manuel,” he cried in bitterness of spirit, “that because of the sin to which this wicked woman drives me I am doomed to join thee presently in hell, and to dwell with

thee there forever among the damned!" And as he thus spoke, Pancho buried his face within his hands and groaned aloud.

Another vast roar of thunder went hurtling through the heavens; and as Pancho started and raised his head again, a strange thrill of dread and wonder went through him: he was utterly alone! Up and down the whole length of the street, bright as day with the constant flashing of the lightning, was only emptiness. The devil had called home his own: Don Juan Manuel had vanished into thin air.

## V.

SLOWLY the savage storm died away into the black cloud-bank above the hills of Tepeyac, and thence was carried northward beyond the mountain girdle of the valley before the soft south wind. Over in the east the brightening sky brought into sharp relief the dark outlines of the great volcanoes; the sharp pinnacle of Popocatepetl and the shrouded figure of Ixtaccíhuatl—the dead White Woman wrapped in eternal snow. The wind from the southward freshened, and a brisk life came into it. A richer, stronger light came into the pale sky beyond the mountains. The shadows below grew thin and opalescent. At last the sun sprang with a bound above the crests of the volcanoes, and over the whole beautiful valley shone the sparkling, resplendent glory of a new-born tropical day.

Just before this brilliant burst of sunlight came—worn and weary with the long strain of tense excitement—Pancho had lost track of his troubles for a mo-

ment, as he leaned against a doorway, in the forgetfulness of sleep. It was only for a moment, literally, that his slumber lasted; but with the sense of waking came uncertainty as to how long he had slept—and then the hope that perhaps the bitter sorrow and the unholy prodigies of the past night were but the unsubstantial creations of a dream. Yet it did not seem to him that this solution could be possible. The pain of his sorrow pressed upon him too heavily, the events of the past night were too clearly defined in his memory, for either the one or the other to be unreal. But he could not be certain. The whole world seemed to him to be very vague and shadowy and far away. Before his eyes danced little points of light. His head was swimming. In his ears were odd, buzzing noises, and the tinkling as of many little bells.

Presently the relief came up. With his wits still hopelessly askew, he fell in with the other men going off duty in its rear. The rhythmic beat of the footsteps, with which his own kept time, made in his mind a cadenced measure that resolved the tinkling in his ears into the slow and mournful ringing of a single bell. Then he realized that a bell truly was ringing; and heard a voice—that seemed to come from a long way off, but that he knew was the voice of the man next him in the ranks—say that it was the Penitents' Bell of Santo Domingo, tolling while the convicts to be sent in the galleon to the Filipinas were formed for their dismal march to Acapulco, whence they would put to sea.

Still with his mind in curious confusion, he entered the watch-house and stood in the line that was formed

in the *patio* to answer to the roll-call before being dismissed. With a dull surprise, he perceived that the Commandant of the City Watch and the Captain of his quarter stood beside the lieutenant on duty, and that with these dignitaries there was also an Alcalde of the court. The presence of the Captain at that early hour of the day was astonishing; the presence of the Commandant and the Alcalde was nothing short of a prodigy.

The roll was called, but the men were not dismissed. The Commandant, the Captain, and the Alcalde whispered together. Their conversation seemed to be of an agreeable nature, for as they whispered they smiled. Presently the lieutenant faced toward the line of men and gave the order: "Number Five, attention! Two paces to the front, march!"

This was Pancho's number. Mechanically he recognized it; stepped two paces to the front; came to a halt, and saluted. In a confused way he concluded that trouble was in store for him. Undoubtedly, he thought, he had slumbered long that morning on his post; some one had reported him; now he was to be punished. But his dread of punishment was forgotten for a moment as came to him again the hope that perhaps the whole series of torments of the past night was but a dream. And again, as he tried to grasp it, did this hope vanish away. The memory of what he had seen from Chucha's window was far too vivid a memory to be based only upon the unsubstantial fabric whereof dreams are made. He knew that the small man wearing a gray cloak and a brown hat in which was a green plume, the man who had tapped at Belita's door, was not a vision but a reality. Therefore his sorrow closed over him again, and

he waited stolidly for the coming reprimand—the first reprimand that ever he had received.

But it was not in a tone of reprimand that the Commandant addressed him, and most extraordinary were the terms and titles which this great personage employed. “Señor Don Francisco Brazo,” he said, “knowledge of your faithful service has come to the ears of his Excellency the Viceroy. Your deserts—”

But Pancho was so dizzied by hearing himself styled “Señor Don,” and by the use toward him on the part of this great dignitary of the formal and stately “you,” that for some moments the Commandant’s words fell on his ears only as empty sounds. Their sense grew clear again only in time for him to hear the last of them: which were freighted with an import so wonderful as fairly to take away his breath.

“—his desire to reward you. Therefore I am charged to present you with this commission that makes you a Captain in the Palace Guards. I felicitate you, Captain Brazo, because I myself know that you deserve your good luck.” And then the Commandant—actually the Commandant—stepped forward to where Pancho stood and shook him by the hand!

“You have my good wishes also, comrade,” said Pancho’s late captain—and thereupon embraced him, while the *patio* rang with the *vivas* of the watchmen standing in line.

“You will report at noon to-day at the Palace guard-room, Captain Brazo,” said the Commandant. “Until that hour you are relieved from duty.”

“One moment, Captain Brazo.” It was the Alcalde who spoke. “I also have something for you



that his Excellency sends. Here is the deed that makes you the owner of a certain property—a little house with a garden around it—on the Calzada de la Piedad. The property is somewhat out of repair. His Excellency, who desires that the officers of his Palace Guards shall be well housed, sends you this purse that he trusts you will employ in the reparation of the house and grounds.”

Pancho had made no answer to the Commandant. Neither did he make answer to the Alcalde. He stood as one dazed—with no certain feeling in his troubled soul save a bitter sorrow because what should have been the crowning of his happiness had come only to be the crowning of his hopeless grief. Verily, Dead Sea fruit was this which was given him. What good was there in his astonishing promotion, and in the still more astonishing gift of the little house, when his greater rank would but set more tongues to wagging about his dishonor, and when the home that he had longed for must now and always be cold and desolate?

As he turned to leave the watch-house, going he knew not where, he pressed his hand to his forehead as one whose head is swimming; and in his walk he staggered so heavily that he would have fallen had not the Alcalde stepped forward quickly and grasped him by the arm.

“Lean upon me, Señor Captain, and let us walk together. A turn in the morning air will refresh and strengthen you. Moreover, still another of his Excellency’s orders remains to be executed before you will be free to go to your good wife, the beautiful Doña Belita, to tell her the good news.”

For answer, Pancho only groaned aloud. In his sorrow, the thought did not occur to him how strange it was that this Alcalde, whom he never before had laid eyes upon, should know that his wife was beautiful and should know also her name!

The Alcalde stepped out at a good pace, and, as the exercise of brisk walking set Pancho's blood astir again in his veins, and as the cool morning air refreshed his feverish body, he found that there were fewer cobwebs in his brain. But as his mind grew clearer his sorrow became more searching. He wondered what was this other order of the Viceroy's which remained to be executed, and whither the Alcalde was leading him—yet cared little: being only thankful for any delay that gave him a respite from returning to what had been his home.

Together they walked on to the Plaza Mayor; passed the Parian and the cathedral, and so northward to the Plazuela de Santo Domingo. Around the outer edges of this Plazuela a great crowd was gathered, chattering noisily; and above the noise of talking sounded now and then the tapping of drums. At a sign from the Alcalde two guards, who seemed to have been in waiting for him beside the chapel of the Espíritu Santo, made a way through the crowd along which he and Pancho passed to the open Plazuela beyond. Here the convicts for the Filipinas were assembled, surrounded by a strong detachment of guards. A little apart from the convicts stood a group of officers; in the midst of which, to judge from the respectful manner in which they left an open space around him, was one officer of very high rank.

As Pancho realized where the Alcalde had brought him, the thought flashed through his mind that all that had passed at the watch-house had been only a dismal comedy, devised by the Viceroy in order to make more stinging the punishment that he was to receive for sleeping while on watch ; that now, in truth, he really was to be punished by being sent over-seas to the Filipinas for the remainder of his miserable days. In all this there was nothing in the least degree improbable ; rather was it entirely in keeping with the Viceroy's manners and ways. The extraordinary eccentricities of the Conde de Revillagigedo were as notorious as was the knowledge of the marvelous celerity with which he contrived to become acquainted with the doings of the humblest of his subjects, and the still more marvelous celerity with which—always in some strange yet appropriate manner of his own devising—he rewarded merit or punished crime. For a moment Pancho was staggered by the thought of a life of exile ; and then his sorrowful heart almost rejoiced at the prospect of it. In truth, as he perceived, excepting only death, no better deliverance could have come to him.

These thoughts went through his mind so quickly that they were ended, and he had come to his desperate conclusion, before he had crossed the open space between the group in the center of the Plazuela and the surrounding crowd. His firm expectation was that he would be led to where the convicts were standing and assigned to a place in their ranks. Instead of this, the Alcalde halted him at a little distance from the group of officers ; waved his hand, as though giving a signal, and at the same moment said : “ The Señor Captain will see

something interesting if he will keep his eyes upon that door."

Pancho felt his head beginning to buzz again with this evident beginning of another in the series of prodigies that were crowding upon him that day. With a feeling of dull wonder he fixed his eyes upon the door toward which the Alcalde pointed—a door in a house on the other side of the Plazuela, from which the crowd was kept back by a double line of soldiers—in expectation that presently the door would open and that some great personage, perhaps the Viceroy himself, would come forth.

But what actually did happen was quite different from that which Pancho expected, and was far more surprising. At a word of command, given by the officer of the escort, a man stepped out from the ranks of the convicts and went toward the door. Immediately behind him walked a soldier with a cocked musket. He was a small man, wearing a long gray cloak and a brown hat with a green plume. Being come to the door, the man tapped upon it lightly three times; then leaned forward, and seemed to speak a few words to some one within; then stepped back, blew toward it a kiss from the tips of his fingers, and turned away—the soldier with the cocked musket all the while standing by with his finger on the trigger of his piece.

At the first sight that Pancho had of this man he gave a cry of rage, and would have bounded forward but for the Alcalde's restraining grasp. While the scene at the door went on, his struggles were so violent that the officer of the escort had to aid the Alcalde in holding him fast.

"Be calm, Señor Captain," said the Alcalde, coolly. "Your desire to get close to that little gentleman is only natural, and it shall be gratified. But it is not necessary for you to go to him; he shall be brought to you. See, he is coming now."

Pancho ceased his struggles, for he saw that the man really was coming toward him. His head was bowed, so that the brim of his hat hid his face. He moved slowly, and with an evident reluctance that required to overcome it an occasional word from the soldier with the cocked musket, who still marched close behind him. In front of Pancho and the Alcalde he halted, his head still bowed. In a pleasant voice the Alcalde said to him: "The musket is loaded. It certainly will go off unless the Señor obliges Captain Brazo by looking him in the face!"

Slowly the bowed head was raised. In a tone of absolute wonder and amazement Pancho uttered but one single word:

"Chucha!"

At that instant a hand was laid gently upon his shoulder, and a voice—that thrilled through every fiber of his being as he recognized it—said to him: "Now thou seest, Pancho, of what poor stuff was made the rage of jealousy that turned to hate thy love for a good woman; that would have urged thee on, but that by God's good grace I chanced to meet with thee, to murder! Thank God and his blessed saints that he who came to thee in the midst of the storm last night was the Conde de Revillagigedo—not, as thou didst imagine in thy foolish and superstitious fancy, the specter of Don Juan Manuel!"

“March!” cried the officer of the escort: and the convicts, herded in by their guard of soldiers, started on their long journey westward to Acapulco, where the galleon lay ready to bear them away forever far down the reaches of the western sea.

“March!” said the Viceroy to Pancho. “Go home to thy wife, the beautiful Belita. Tell her of thy good fortune, which is also hers; but fail not to tell her, too, and humbly, of thy sinful doubting of her faithfulness. Fear not that she will refuse to pardon thee—for the saints in heaven are not more long-suffering in forgiveness than is a good woman who loves with a pure and constant love.”

## LA MINA DE LOS PADRES.

For a hundred years the Christian Spaniards had wrought evil in Christ's name. From their stronghold in the town of the Holy Faith their cruel power had spread out over all the valley-lands, constraining the Pueblo Indians, in the fear of death, to grievous toil in the mines, and to a yet more grievous service in the worship of the Spanish gods. And the Pueblos, in whose breasts hope scarce longer had a home, almost had ceased to beg from their own god deliverance. That was a most cruel and wicked time.

And it was in that time that marvelous treasure flowed from a certain mine up in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains that was called, because it belonged to the Fathers whose monastery was at Santa Clara, *la mina de los Padres*. Of all the many rich mines in this silver-strewn range, the Mine of the Fathers was incomparably the richest. From it came wealth so great that even the avarice of those who fattened upon its kingly revenue was almost sated. And yet, as its shafts sank deeper, and as its galleries penetrated yet farther into the bowels of the mountain, richer and richer grew its yield. So over all the realm of New Spain, and thence across seas even to the old Spanish country, the fame of *la mina de los Padres* went abroad.

But, with the story of its wondrous product of glittering silver, never a word was told of the bitter misery of those who toiled in its dark depths—driven more harshly than ever beasts were driven, crushed down by toil to cruel and painful death, that the treasure might be wrung from the rock and brought within the reach of man. Nor was there any sign in the triumphant tidings sent homeward of the thousands of converts to the Christian faith at what cost of death to hundreds these thousands, through terror of death, had been won to the service of the Christian God; at what cost of rigid, ruthless mastership this service was maintained.

So at last, in that direful summer of the year 1680, the wind that the Spaniards had sown for a century came up a whirlwind of flame and blood, sweeping over and devastating all the land. Out from a clear sky came the storm. In a moment was upon them, in its terrible might and majesty, the pursuing wrath of God. Almost to a man the dwellers in the outpost towns—Taos, Santa Clara, San Yldefonso, Santa Cruz—were slain. At last even Santa Fé itself was abandoned, and the conquered masters fled pitifully southward for refuge from their conquering slaves. So was a great wrong punished; so at last was justice done to the Pueblos, when the God who is God of both pagan and Christian in his pity gave them his strength.

Long years passed by before the Spaniards again made good their hold upon the land; and when at last their strength in possession was restored, and the new dwellers in the monastery at Santa Clara sought to reopen the Mine of the Fathers, out of which those



before them had drawn so great a revenue, no trace of the mine could they anywhere find ! That the maps and plans of it which had been in the monastery should be gone was no surprising matter ; but strange it was that the very mine itself should have vanished from the earth ! Seeking it diligently, but finding it not, they came to know that the Pueblos, remembering the horror of their toil in former times, had destroyed the trail leading up to it among the mountains ; with infinite labor had filled in the great main shaft, and had taken away all traces of the workings from around about the shaft's mouth. And, knowing this, they sought to wrest the secret from them. Some were put to the torture, some were slain outright, that the living might be driven by dread of a like fate to tell where the mine was hid. But neither biting pain nor fear of death sufficed to shake their stern resolve. Bravely, grimly, in painful life and in dying agony, they held the secret locked within their breasts.

So the years drifted by and were marshaled into centuries ; the power of the Spaniards waned to a shadow and vanished ; a new race came in and possessed what, in times of old, had been their possessions ; and while, through these fleeting years and slow-moving centuries, through all this wreck and change, the fame of *la mina de los Padres* lived on as a legend, the mine itself never was known of men.

In the legend of it that survived, 'twas said that upon him who should find it again would fall the curse of the Pueblos' god.

There is no more beautiful sight in all the fair

land that once was the realm of New Spain than the view at sunset from Santa Clara looking westward, down the valley of the Rio Grande. The town—a score or so of brown *adobe* houses, clustered around the old church and the now partly-ruined monastery—stands upon a little promontory, the last low wave of the foot-hills of the Sangre de Cristo range. The mountain ramparts which tower on each side of the valley go down in grand perspective toward the west, their peaks standing out blue-gray against the brighter blue-gray of the evening sky. And off toward the dying sun the sky takes a violet tint, and then a rose, and then a soft, rich red, and then a glowing crimson that is flecked and spangled with a great glory of flaming gold. Yet is the setting sun not seen, for, cutting off sight of it completely, the great castellated mountain of San Yldefonso raises the level lines of its broad battlements darkly, sharply against the dazzle of light and color beyond. Leading downward, as though it were a glittering highway to this lordly castle's gates, the Rio Grande flows smoothly between its low banks: the red and golden gleamings of the evening sky reflected on its rapid current. Each night there is fresh joy in beholding anew this magnificent resplendency, this perfect picture fresh from the hand of God.

Techita, sitting in a nook in the bluff below the walls of the old monastery, loved greatly to look upon this God-given picture; to watch its glory grow as the sun dropped down beyond the mountain of San Yldefonso and thence sent up rich colorings over all the western sky; to watch its glory wane as the sun sank yet lower behind the far mountains beyond, and

the color-music slowly died away. And then, when the edge of night was come, and gray darkness was shutting in the west, and in the east only faint, soft colorings remained, it was her wont to go gently into the shadowy church, and there, before the old picture of the sweet Santa Clara, make her pure offering of thankfulness in prayer.

Nor would Techita's thankfulness be lessened, as she walked slowly away from the church in the twilight, by catching sight of Juan standing by the doorway of his little home in a corner of the old monastery, and by seeing, even in the half darkness, the love-light shining in his eyes. Yet with her gladness that Juan loved her would come troublous doubts into Techita's heart. For, down in this old Mexican town, these two were living over the story that is as old as human life itself, and that ever is sorrowfully new—the story of a hopeless love.

A stranger coming to Santa Clara — at least a stranger from the barbarous northern country—would have perceived no outward difference in the estates of old Pablo, Techita's father, and of Techita's lover, Juan. Such a stranger, supposing that he had taken the trouble to think anything about them at all, would have "sized them up," after the abrupt, uncivil manner of *Americanos* generally, simply as a pair of poverty-stricken Mexicans; and he might have gone a step farther, and wondered how on earth they managed to keep body and soul together, anyway. But, so far as old Pablo was concerned, this estimate would have been very far astray. In point of fact, old Pablo was a rich man. Half a mile of the best land along the river was his;

his also was the great flock of goats that every night at milking-time came trooping homeward to the *corral*; his also was the great herd of cattle that pastured on the *mesa negra*, half a dozen leagues away to the north; and in his granaries was a vast store of barley and beans and corn.

And Juan had neither flocks nor herds nor lands! All his earthly possessions were the few household things in the little home that the Padre, pitying him, had suffered him to make for himself in a corner of the old monastery. All his wealth was his strong young body and stout heart and ready hands.

Of a truth, this handsome Juan had been born into the world under an unlucky star. While he was yet a boy, the dreadful *viruelas* had swept down upon Santa Clara, and in a month's time his father and his mother, together with half the little town, were huddled into hastily dug graves. And he was still a boy when the old aunt who had cared for him died also, and left him to make his fight for life alone. Then it was that the good Padre had found for him a home in an odd corner of the partly ruined monastery, long since deserted of its old-time tenants and falling slowly into a complete decay. Here, for a dozen years and more, he had made shift to live, helping the Padre in the offices of the church, herding goats in the fallow season of the year, and in the growing season working in the fields. The Padre, whose heart was tender, greatly loved the lonely boy; and by the Padre's care he had become a prodigy of learning. Actually, he could read! And, still more wonderful, he could sign his name—and make about it, too, as brave a maze of flourishes as any

Mexican in all the land! But for all his headful of knowledge, Juan was the poorest of the poor.

No wonder, then, that his love for Techita was hopeless. Pablo was a shrewd old fellow, with a keen eye—for all his look of sleepiness—for money-holding; and that his daughter (who also was his only child, for Pablito and Pablito's mother had died together in a single day in that dismal small-pox time) should marry a rich man was the dearest purpose of his heart. During the past year or two, since Techita had begun to blossom into womanhood, the gossips of the little town had affirmed that the solemn old Don José, who owned the great *hacienda* at Abiquí, was the husband for Techita whom old Pablo had in mind. But there were those who said—saying it beneath the breath, for Señor Don Pablo was one whom it was not well to offend—that to put such a fate upon Techita would be a crime. And others, still bolder, declared that Juan and Techita, the handsomest couple in all the valley's length, were sent thus together into the world by the good God that they might be man and wife. But these whisperings never came to old Pablo's ears; and, had they come, he would have laughed at them as old women's foolishness—so right it seemed to him that his daughter should wed her wealth with greater wealth; so absurd would have seemed to him the suggestion that she should wed with such a one as this goat-herding, field-working Juan.

Therefore it was that Techita, knowing well and dreading much her father's will concerning her, felt her heart troubled within her by knowing of the love that Juan had for her; by knowing that her own love was

given to Juan in return. And often, as she knelt in the church as the daylight passed away, she prayed that the gentle Santa Clara would soften her father's heart, so that happiness might come to her and to her lover. But the time went on, and no change came to open the way whereon she longed to go ; and each passing month now, as she grew rapidly into womanhood, made the time more near for her to be the wife of Don José.

Thus matters stood when all the valley was filled with a sullen alarm and wonder by the incoming once again of the hated *Americanos* from the North—this time not as an army (against which, as at the time of their first coming, could be had at least the hot satisfaction of fighting), but as the builders of a railroad : a devilish and hurtful contrivance, concerning which nothing was certain, save that it certainly was a thing of evil to be dreaded and abhorred. And when, the railroad being builded, all manner of evil *Americanos*—cut-throats, desperadoes, the advance-guard of rascality that pours into each newly opened region of the West—came down upon them, destroying the pleasant peacefulness of their quiet land, their hatred of their old-time enemies grew yet more bitter and intense ; the more intense because, instinctively, they knew their own powerlessness to stay the incoming stream.

The wave that surged down upon them was a mighty one ; for, now that the railroad had opened the way to it, the ancient fame of the treasure-laden Sangre de Cristo was remembered, and everywhere the mountains were dotted with prospectors' camps. Once more the legend of the Mine of the Fathers was revived, and

in many a camp hearts beat quicker and breath came shorter as the story of its marvelous riches was told anew. Again it was sought for with not less eagerness and with more skill than it had been sought for two hundred years before; and again was the search fruitless. One after another they who sought for it gave up their search as hopeless, or were satisfied with making lesser strikes, until only one man remained to carry on the quest. But this man stuck grimly to the purpose that had brought him southward from the States.

Dick Irving was a person who did what he made up his mind to do. Up in Pueblo—the Colorado town in the Arkansas Valley—he had come across a trooper of Price's old command, who had fought his way down from Taos to Santa Fé in 1847; and who, the fighting ended, had married a Mexican wife and had settled himself for life in the land that he had helped to win. There are not a few of these bits of army drift scattered over the country north of Santa Fé. And this old soldier told so glowing a story of *la mina de los Padres* that Irving forthwith sold out his interest in the "Rattling Meg," up at Leadville, and in a week's time was down in the Sangre de Cristo with his prospecting outfit, and at work.

"I'll find that mine or I'll die for it!" he told his Leadville partner before he left for the south; and he added, his hand resting easily on the butt of his revolver: "If any man is ahead of me, by — I'll shoot him and jump his claim!"

In matters of this nature Dick Irving was a man who kept his word.

Techita sat in her nook under the edge of the bluff and watched the sun go down, and very, very heavy was her heart. At last the stroke that she had dreaded for so long had fallen : her father had told her that the time had come when she must be the wife of Don José. Nor would he so much as listen to her entreaties that this might not be. Breaking in upon her words, he had said : " It is my will "—and so had left her, desolate of hope.

That night there was no beauty for her in the sunset ; and when the glory was gone out of the sky and she went slowly through the dimness of twilight into the darkness of the church, bitter sorrow was upon her and her eyes were weary with their weight of tears. She knelt before the picture of the saint, as was her habit, but from her lips there came no prayer. What was the good of praying ? she thought. Had she not prayed again and again with all the faith and strength that was in her that she might be spared that which now had come ? The saint was far away in heaven—too far to heed the pleadings of a poor, lonely child on earth. Ah ! would that she were safe in heaven, too !

And then, still kneeling upon the clay floor before the picture of the saint, she fell into a dreary reverie, thinking of the lifetime of happiness for which she had hoped, of the lifetime of sorrow that now she must endure. Yet, while she knelt thus, looking the while sadly, steadfastly upon the saint's sweet face, shining out from the surrounding darkness as a gleam from the sunset's after-glow struck full upon it through the little window beneath the roof, she seemed to see a look of loving pity come into the gentle eyes, to see upon the



tender lips a pitying smile ; and the hope came to her that the saint, forgiving her for doubting her saintly power to comfort and to aid, even yet, through the saving strength of heavenly grace, would turn her mourning into joy. So there came into her troubled soul a little thrill of happiness.

“ Techa ! ”

A quiver went over her, and for a moment her heart stopped beating, as the thought fell upon her that, in very truth, the saint had spoken—and then she knew that the voice sounding low in the darkness was the voice of Juan.

“ Techa, art thou here ? I must speak with thee. I have to tell thee of a great joy.”

She made a little sound in answer, while rushing in upon her came the glad hope that the promise given her by the saint’s pitying glance and smile was coming true.

“ My Techa, listen ! The good God has had pity for our sorrow, and the bar between us is broken down. A great wonder has happened that has made me richer than thy father by a thousand-fold ! By God’s grace I have found again the wonderful mine in the mountains that belonged to the Fathers back in the long-past time. I am rich, rich even beyond thought ; and richer than all, because now thou also wilt be mine ! ”

Then Juan told the story of the good fortune that had come to him. One corner of his dwelling-place in the old monastery—the corner in which was the little triangular fireplace—long had been in a ruinous state that promised at any time a fall. That day the fall had come, and from the broken wall had dropped out a roll

of tough hide, in which were wrapped securely the lost plans of the ancient mine. Thus had they been hidden by hands soon still in death, on that August day, two hundred years before, when the Pueblos rose in revolt against their Spanish task-masters: the visible agents of the avenging wrath of God.

Yellow with age were the plans, pale the once black drafting, but still the plotting was distinct and clear: showing the site of the monastery; showing the long-lost trail leading up beyond the *arroyo* of San Pedro into the mountains; showing the mine itself, a league or more away, at the trail's end. To one knowing the country well, as Juan did, everything was clear. Over the mountain-side, high up above the cañon wherein the mine was sunk, he had driven his goats a hundred times. There was no uncertainty about his discovery; *la mina de los Padres* was found, and was his!

With a quickly beating heart Techita listened to this wonderful story of good fortune, and as she listened a great gladness filled her soul. It was only the wealth of Don José, she knew, that had made him seem pleasant in her father's eyes; Juan, with his incomparably greater wealth, need have no fears now that his suit would be rejected. Happiness enveloped her, for now at last her happiness was sure. In perfect thankfulness she knelt again before the sweet Santa Clara's picture, drawing Juan also on his knees beside her; and there, with grateful thoughts, for their hearts were all too full for words, they gave praise silently for the blessing of mercy which, through Santa Clara's intercession, had come to them from the merciful and loving God.

Yet, even as she thus knelt, fear and misgiving came

into Techita's soul. Mingled with her Spanish blood was the blood of the Pueblo race, of the pagans whom her Christian ancestors had treated so cruelly in the time of old ; and together with her Christian faith was, if not faith, at least a fearful reverence for the Pueblos' god. In dread she remembered now, in the under-current of thought below her thoughts of thankfulness and praise, the direful prophecy that upon whomsoever should find again the Mine of the Fathers the curse of the Pueblos' god would fall.

Standing outside the door of the church, the young moon, just risen over the mountains in the east, shining faintly down upon them, Techita falteringly told her fears ; and Juan, full of gladness now that his long sorrow was at an end, laughed lightly and bade her fear no more.

"We are good Christians, my Techa," he said, "and our valiant God and his brave saints watch over us. What need we fear from this false god, who for ages has been dead and gone?"

But as thus irreverently he spoke, there fell upon him also a strange sense of dread ; for he also had Pueblo faith deep down in his heart, because of the Pueblo blood which flowed in his veins. By an effort he stirred himself and drove the dread away. In the faint light Techita did not mark the change that for a moment came over his face as he ceased to speak, and so had comfort from his cheerful words. It was indeed true, she thought, that the blessed saints were brave defenders against all evil powers ; and she was well assured now that one of the saints at least—this gracious Santa Clara—had promised to them her potent aid. There-

fore had she a firm foundation whereon to rest her faith and hope. Yet, as she walked slowly homeward, vague forebodings of sorrow forced themselves upon her; nor could she, with all her faith in Santa Clara's helpfulness, with all her bright hopes of the happiness that was to come, wholly drive these dark thoughts away.

Dick Irving was puzzled. He believed, and with good reason, that what he did not know about prospecting was not worth the finding out. And yet it was a point in prospecting that was puzzling him now, and, to use his own words, puzzling him the worst kind.

The knotty question that was too much for him was where a piece of "float" came from that he had found in the *arroyo* of San Pedro. When he had found that particular piece of loose rock, it had made his heart jump and his mouth water. In the course of his extended experience in prospecting, he never had come across anything that for richness came anywhere near it; it was richer than the best of the Leadville carbonates, richer than the best of the ruby silver down in the Gunnison. On a rough calculation, he concluded that the vein where it came from would mill-run not less than a thousand ounces. If the vein had any body to it, that meant more millions than he could think of at once without shivering.

But the trouble was that the beginning of his prodigious find was also the end of it. The bit of float was like the footprint on Robinson Crusoe's island; there it was, solitary—not a sign to tell whence it came or to what it belonged. He had spent nearly a month in the *arroyo*, turning over carefully every stone and

running his knowing eyes jealously along every crevice in its rocky walls. Not another scrap of the float could he find. And now his mad was getting up. His reputation as a prospector was at stake. More than this, he knew that close at hand, on the flanks of one of the two mountains which towered above him, was a mine which to find was to make his everlasting fortune; which to miss was to miss the great chance of his life—and the pleasing conviction was growing upon him more strongly every day that he was going to miss it.

He knew, of course, that almost his only chance was to follow up the float; and that was the reason why he had put in such thorough work upon the *arroyo*. When this failed him he took to the mountains themselves. It was a desperate chance, but it was the only chance left to him. He put in another barren month in this fashion, and then he was about ready to own himself beaten; to own that for once he had walked all around and all over the mine that he was looking for without being able to make even a good guess as to where it was. Once, indeed, for a moment he had felt hopeful. In a little cañon, hard to enter because of a great wall formed across its mouth by jagged masses of rock which had fallen from the cliffs above, he came upon some surface rock that was identical with the bit of float that he had found. The ledge was oddly broken about its middle by a heap of gray, weather-worn fragments of stone. He never had come upon a formation like this, and had he been a geologist he would have found a good deal in it to interest him. Being simply a prospector, he examined the ledge purely with an eye to

business; and from this point of view it was eminently unsatisfactory. There were, to be sure, traces of mineral, but not the least suggestion of the inexhaustible wealth that he knew must be in the rock to which his specimen belonged. Therefore he kicked the ledge contemptuously, swore at his own ill luck and stupidity with the mellow fluency that can be acquired only by long residence in mining camps, and so turned sullenly away.

It would have strengthened Dick Irving's fast-lessening faith in his own instinct as a prospector, however, had he known that it was the art of man and not a freak of Nature that was leading him astray; had he known that at the very moment when he was cursing his own stupidity *la mina de los Padres* was beneath his feet! Had he but tossed aside the piece of rock whereon he stood, he would have found—wasted by rust, but still recognizable—an old hammer-head from which the handle long since had mouldered away; and so would have had proof enough that he had found the rich prize that he had sworn to find when he came down into the South.

On the evening of the day after that on which Juan had told Techita of his great discovery, he came to her again in the church to tell her that all had gone well with him in his search in the mountains, and that in very truth he had found the long-lost mine. In glad proof of his words he showed her a rusty hammer-head that he had pulled out from beneath a rock in the mouth of the filled-in shaft—the very hammer-head that Dick Irving, for all his cleverness, had failed to find.

"God has been very good to us, my Techá," he said, as they stood again beneath the picture of the gentle Santa Clara in the soft darkness that was stealing down upon the dying day. "His mercy has come to us in our sorrow, and, through the entreaty of the dear saint, he has given us comfort in hope. All is well with us now. Thy father would indeed have refused thee to the goat-herd Juan, but to Señor Don Juan, the owner of the Mine of the Fathers, he will not say no. I shall have thee for my very own, my Techita; and for all our lives long, in our love and happiness, we will praise thankfully and worship reverently this sweet saint who has taken from us our sorrow, and given us in its stead great joy.

"And see, my little one," he added, lightly, after they had stood for a little space with hands clasped closely and eyes turned gratefully upon the saint's face—see! I have found the mine, and yet the curse has not fallen! There was only folly in thy fears, my little heart. The blessed saints are strong to stay and to save them who have faith in their holy goodness; strong to drive back the evil power of this false god, whom long ago they conquered and threw down."

But again, as he spoke these daring words, Juan felt a shudder of dread go through him. For all the bravery of his manliness the thought would come: What if, in defiance of the power for good of the blessed saints, the power for evil of the Pueblos' god even yet lived on?

Upon Techita's heart lay heavily this same dread; nor was it greatly lightened by Juan's cheerfulness. Almost was she persuaded by her great love for him to

bid him give up the treasure that he had found ; to suffer herself, a sacrifice for her love's sake, to be wed in accordance with her father's will. Better even this great misery, she thought, than that harm should come to her lover.

Thinking these doubting thoughts, she stood irresolute, her eyes turned questioningly upon Santa Clara's face ; and again, in the soft, faint light that shone upon it, the sweet face seemed to smile upon her a promise of protection that bade her trust and hope. Therefore she hushed the doubts which were in her heart, and listened welcomingly to Juan's glad promises of the joy which was to be. And in making these promises Juan also forgot the fears which had beset him, and felt only a brave elation in the certainty of the happiness that had come to them from the good God. So, in the pale moonlight, they parted again, having in the brightness of their future a full and joyous faith.

Yet, in despite of this faith, through the long darkness of the night Techita, waking, was oppressed by dread ; and in her sleep there came to her fearful dreams. And in waking and in sleeping the thought that possessed her was that out of the very fullness of her happiness a desolating, irremediable sorrow was to come.

Nor did the brightness of the sunshine, when at last day came again, chase away her dark forebodings. A great heaviness lay upon her soul ; a dreary belief weighed upon her that the sorrow which was surely coming was very near at hand. Nor could she doubt that, whatever this sorrow was to be, it must come to her through Juan. As she knew, Juan had gone once more into the mountains, along the way that he had



told her of, to the old mine. Had he been in the village, or working in the near-by fields, she would have braved her father's displeasure and gone to him—so keen was her deep consciousness that a malignant power was loosed to do him harm.

Slowly the day wore on, each hour in passing adding to her restlessness and nervous dread. And at last, when the still time of noon was come, and all the town was hushed in sleep, she no longer could restrain the impulse that was upon her to go to him; to brave with him whatever was the danger; to defend him living; to lie down and die beside him should he be dead. Out from the silent house, out from the sleeping village, up the rock-strewn *arroyo* of San Pedro, Techita walked firmly; in her heart a great daring born of her greater love.

That day also Dick Irving went up into the mountains. He acknowledged to himself savagely that he had about got to the end of his rope, and that this would be the last day of his foolery. For once he would have to own up that he had tackled a job that was too big for him; and he was the more ugly over it because the piece of float that he had in his pocket made him believe absolutely that all that was told of *la mina de los Padres* was true. He *knew* that the mine was somewhere up beyond the *arroyo* of San Pedro; and knowing this, and knowing how all his skillful search for it had ended in failure, he gritted his teeth together in sullen rage.

He thought himself more than half a fool for making this last expedition, for his faith that it would end in anything but another failure was very weak indeed.

But he was a conscientious man—as a prospector, that is—and he was not quite satisfied to go North again without having one more look at the ledge of rocks in the little cañon. This was the one place in the mountains where he had struck rock identical with his specimen; and while he had convinced himself by his first exploration that there was no mineral in the ledge comparable for richness with that in the float, his absolute failure in all other directions made him desirous of having yet another look here. Moreover, his careful study of the locality had shown him that, all things considered, the cañon was the most likely place from which the bit of float could have come. But for the mass of rocks in the cañon's mouth, he would have been quite certain that it was from there that his specimen had started. And this wall of rocks across the mouth of the cañon bothered him. In all the years that he had been prospecting he never had seen anything like it. If such a thing had not been impossible upon its face, he would have believed that the rocks had been broken loose deliberately and thrown down from the cliffs above not by Nature but by man. The more that his mind had dwelt upon the oddity of this barrier, and upon the equal oddity of the mass of broken rocks in the line of the ledge, the more was his interest aroused. There was something queer about the place that attracted him, and he was determined to see it again. Of course, as he said to himself, with a good deal of hard swearing at his general brainlessness, there was nothing to be found there, and he only was going on a fool's errand. But, all the same, with the dogged perseverance that was characteristic of him, he pulled

himself together for the tough tramp up the *arroyo* and the mountain-side beyond.

It was a tough tramp, and no mistake; and, as he had not any heart worth speaking of in what he was doing, he went slowly and made many halts. This was not his usual way of working, but he was low in his mind and was thinking gloomy thoughts which quite took the customary spring out of his toes and heels. There is but little satisfaction to a man in knowing that he has had his hand very nearly on great good fortune for two months and more, and yet is losing it, after all. Dick Irving, whose nature was not a gentle one, was in a state of glowing rage as he reflected that this was just about where he was—rage at his luck, at himself, at all the world. About the one thing that could have given him any comfort just then would have been a fight. He was fairly aching to balance his own misfortunes by taking them out on somebody else's hide.

Suddenly he was aroused, by the deepening shadows in the *arroyo*, to the fact that the end of the day was not far off. As he had intended camping for the night in the cañon, this fact did not disconcert him, but it made him very considerably quicken his steps. Yet, for all his haste, the sun was near setting when he climbed the mass of stones lying in a great ridge across the cañon's mouth. Fortunately for his purposes, the cañon faced westward, and all within it was a blaze of mellow light from the level rays of the setting sun.

As he climbed the barrier he heard a clicking noise, that made him start as though he had received a blow; and as he cautiously peered over the barrier's crest he saw a sight that sent the blood with a rush to his heart,

and then fiercely tingling through all his veins. For the sound that he heard was the click of a pick against rock, and the sight that he saw was a man, not a hundred yards away from him, at work on the very ledge itself! If here truly was the lost mine, then was he too late; another set of stakes was in ahead of his!

Luckily, the other man had not heard him scrambling over the rocks, and so, for the present, at least, he was master of the situation. Getting into a good position for observation, and crouching so that he could see, yet could not be seen, he carefully studied the ground. Evidently the man had been at work for many hours, and had worked hard. The loose rocks which had lain in the break in the ledge were rolled away in all directions—Dick could not but feel instinctive respect for the set of muscles that had dealt successfully with the tough lifting and hauling that this piece of work involved—and the earth that had washed in between the stones had been carefully shoveled away. This was about all that had been accomplished. But it was enough. For there, clearly defined in the line of the ledge, was the square-cut mouth of the old shaft. *La mina de los Padres*, lost for two hundred years, again was found!

As Dick Irving realized the situation, the rage that had been upon him all day culminated. He was in a white heat of passion—and as tranquil as a morning in June. There was just one thing to be done, and he meant to do it.

“Only a Greaser, anyway,” he muttered. “The idea,” he added, disdainfully, “of a d——d Greaser owning the Mine of the Fathers!” In the excess of

contemptuous disgust that this thought caused him he spat upon the ground.

Over the sights of his revolver he measured the distance carefully with his eye, and with commendable coolness decided that it was too great for certainty. As the business had to be done, he did not want to make a mess of it ; moreover, as he prudently reflected, around the shoulder of the cañon there might be another man. With these judicious thoughts in mind, he worked his way softly across the wall of rocks—keeping well in the shelter of the great fragments—and down on its inner side. Once within the cañon, there was no difficulty in slipping from rock to rock, until he stopped at last behind two great boulders, and through the rift between them covered his man at a distance of less than a dozen yards.

Juan had stopped in his work, and stood leaning on the handle of his pick. Over him and around him shone a blaze of rich red light, the last rays of the setting sun. His face had a weary look, and his strained muscles were relaxed ; but stronger than his look of weariness was his look of joy, and even the pose of his tired body was elate. For the great triumph of his life was won : at last he knew himself a victor over Fate. In his happiness he spoke his thought aloud : “ My Techa ! the joy-time of our life has come ! ”

And even as he spoke these words the sharp crack of Dick Irving's revolver rattled and pealed and roared between the rocky walls of the cañon—and Juan sank down across the newly opened shaft of the Mine of the Fathers with a bullet through his heart. At that instant the sun dropped below the level of the wall of

rocks, and all the lower portion of the cañon was left in dusk—duskier because in the upper portion the light still shone full and clear.

Through the cañon, mingling with the echoes of the pistol-shot, yet rising above them, shrilly, wailingly, sounded a cry of mortal agony ; a cry despairing, desolate, charged with the burden of a lifetime of bitter woe ; a cry that made Dick Irving's weather-hardened face turn pale, and that sent a chill into the very depths of his tough heart ; and while he wondered, doubting, trembling, whence came this woful sound, Techita had sprung down from the crest of the ridge of rocks and was standing by her dead lover's side.

Her figure, seen in the gloom of the cañon and through the powder-smoke that lingered in the rift between the bowlders, loomed tall and indistinct against the darkness of the rocks beyond. He could not see her form ; he could not see her face—wrenched with the agony that comes when love dies suddenly before despair. Raising her hand heavenward, like the prophetess of old, her voice hushed to the deep, solemn tone of one who stands upon the very border of Time, and sees out clearly into the awful mysteries of Eternity, she spoke : “ The curse has fallen—the curse of the Pueblos' god ! ”

Dick Irving was satisfied with the good stroke of business that he had done, and his finer feelings rebelled against doing any more business of that sort just then. On the other hand, his sturdy common sense told him that there was only one course that he could rationally pursue ; that he had gone too far for drawing back to be possible.

"As nasty a job as ever I got into," he said to himself, standing beside the shaft, as he drew two fresh cartridges from his belt and dropped them into the emptied chambers of his revolver. Then, presently, in a burst of righteous indignation: "Confound her! It ain't my fault, anyway. Why couldn't she have had the sense to say she was a woman?" And then, as his nerves grew steadier, he added more cheerfully: "Well, after all, it's nothing but a pair of Greasers—and it was a lucky whack for me that I got here to-day, and in time to save the mine!"

Slowly the glory of the sunset spread across the west. Rising against the red and golden splendor, the battlements of San Yldefonso stood sharply lined; high into the gray-blue sky shot red and golden rays; over the broad waters of the Rio Grande played red and golden lights; all heaven and all the earth beneath seemed blended in a red and golden symphony. Then, slowly, all this splendor passed away, until nothing was left of it save, in the far east, over the distant mountains, a little rosy cloud.

In the still church, where hung the picture of the sweet Santa Clara, was loneliness; in the still cañon, high up on the mountain, was death. Over all the earth, darkening the silent church, darkening the silent cañon, had come gray night.

The Lucky Whack Mining Company, as Dick Irving declares—and he ought to know, for he is president of it, and lives East in a style that proves that he has lots of pay-dirt somewhere—is a rattling success. Daily output, two thousand ounces—and millions in sight.

## SAINT MARY OF THE ANGELS.

### I.

IN that old, old time when the viceroys of King Philip ruled the province of New Spain, certain holy men—Franciscan Brothers vowed to God's service—went far into the savage wilderness of the North and spent their lives willingly that the souls of the Indians there dwelling might be brought to a knowledge of Christian grace and so be saved. Thus there came to be in that remote, wild region many little mission stations, where two or three Brothers—dwelling together in such rude shelters as could be contrived by unskilled hands—preached constantly to the savages the saving mercy and the infinite loving-kindness vouchsafed to them who hearkened with a confident conviction to the living Word of God; and of these fortalices of the faith Christian, whence paganism most resolutely was assailed, Santa María de los Ángeles was one.

In the course of years, as the leaven of righteousness worked itself (yet never very thoroughly) into the heathen lump, there came to be around the little chapel a cluster of *adobe* houses; and with water drawn through *acéquias* from the stream on the bank whereof the chapel stood—in which stream the first of all the



Christian converts were baptized—some part of the arid land was fertilized ; and on the far-reaching plain, and the slopes of the hillsides round about, meagerly pastured a few scant flocks and herds.

Everywhere in this sunny, easy-going land time moves slowly. Over the town, if town it could be called, of Saint Mary of the Angels, time scarcely moved at all. Therefore it was that when the American-built railroad, coming down from the North, reached Santa María and passed it, the whole of the town still was only the chapel and the half-dozen or so of *adobe* houses which the Brothers had builded there three centuries and more before. And in these many years the only change that had come to pass was that the chapel—in which mass now was said but once a year, when a priest came from afar to hold service on the day of Our Lady—had fallen almost into ruin ; and that all memory of the good Brothers, and of their holy teachings, was buried in a forgotten past. Of another such barren and deserted vineyard as Santa María had become a Franciscan chronicler hath written : “ Where aforetime our Brothers planted the seed of God’s love and mercy now only is a devil’s garden—overgrown with a forest of the damnable doctrines of paganism and choked by the weeds of natural human sin.”

In point of fact, when the superintendent appointed John Hardy station-master at Santa María, he considered it necessary to preface the appointment with an apology.

“ I may as well tell you, Hardy,” he said, “ that Santa María’s about the hardest station on the whole line. Such a crowd of Greaser toughs as have got to-

gether there I've never come across in one lump before. There's not many of 'em ; but there isn't a man in the lot that's fit for anything but to be shot off-hand. All the men are horse-thieves or smugglers or both, with a fair sprinkling of murderers ; and all the women—well, I guess we won't talk about the women. I hate to put you there, and that's a fact ; but unless I can get a decent man there the Company's property will all go to the devil. There's a watering-station at Santa María, you know, and something's all wrong with it. Barwood, who's in charge, is a tough if ever there was one. But I wouldn't mind how tough he was if he'd only run his pump right ; but he don't. We only water four engines a day there, as a steady thing, and pumping two days in the week ought to keep his tank full easy. But he requisitions enough fire-wood to keep his pump going all the time. I want you to go to work and find out what his game is. He's a bad man, for sure ; but I guess you can manage to down him. You know how to shoot ? ”

“ I've been living around in New Mexico and Arizona and Texas for the last two or three years,” Hardy answered, with the modest indirectness in such matters that usually characterizes a good man on the frontier.

“ I guess you'll do, then. I hope there won't be any shooting ; but, if it comes, just you take care of yourself and the Company will back you up in it. I declare, I hate to put you at Santa María, I do indeed. I don't mind telling you that I'm sick of this d——d country myself, and I'm going to pull out of it pretty soon and go where there's white men. Now, I tell you what I'll do : I'll take you along. I've got things pretty well

fixed for myself, and I guess I can fix things so as to rope you in too—so just you be ready to put your hat on when I start. While I'm here, though, I've got to do the square thing by the Company—which is a d——d sight more than the Company's done by me—so just you take hold at Santa María and get things in shape there. Comfort yourself with thinking that you won't have more than two months of it; and then we'll light out together and get into God's country once more—and after that I guess you won't ketch me taking any more Greaser in mine! I don't know what brought *you* down into these parts; but I know *I* came because I was a d——n fool! I'm not any too proud of myself, but I do think that I'm a cussed sight too good for Mexico; and, unless I'm badly out, so are you. I guess you're not the kind, any more than I am, that was made for rustling on the frontier."

## II.

JOHN HARDY certainly was not made for the frontier; though, to do him justice, he had the "sand" that enabled him to hold his own there pretty well. But then for the past three years he had been very much in doubt as to whether he had been made for anything useful at all. Fortune had not treated this young man well, and the instrument that Fortune had used to his injury was a woman.

Hardy was a fair specimen of the hard-working American. In the coal-mining town in the Wyoming Valley, where he was born, he had gone to work when he was sixteen in the Company's store as "boy"; and in

the course of half a dozen years he had won his way to a responsible place at the books. He was a steady, resolute young fellow, who did not meddle with anybody's business, and who insisted that nobody should meddle with his. He found it necessary to mash several heads in his quiet, decisive way before his attitude toward the community in which he lived was understood; but when, by this simple and direct method—well understood in a mining town, where the ordeal of combat was a recognized social institution—he had made his position clear and himself respected, he was let alone. Thus he fairly established himself as a good citizen who could maintain his own rights and who respected the rights of others; and as a good business man who could make his way in the world. And then, when he was twenty-three years old, he began his misfortunes by falling in love.

Hardy did not think that there was anything unfortunate about it. He did think, though—being a modest young fellow—that Mary Wade was a great deal too good for him. Her people lived in Wilkesbarré, and she came down to take charge of the primary department of the public school. A good deal of doubt was expressed among the towns-folk as to her ability to manage that primary department; but, according to 'Squire Rambo—who was chairman of the School Board, and who also was a mine superintendent—she did manage it very successfully.

"She ain't much to look at for strong," said 'Squire Rambo, "but she's just a little blue-eyed breaker to go, and don't you forget it! Me and the other trustees sized her up right from the start. Why, as t' that pri-

mary department she's just—she's just sot on it; reg'larly makes every one o' them little devils pertend he's a lamb, an' live up t' his pertensions. An' she's that gentle an' sweet with 'em, when they give her half a chance, that when she ain't act'ally lickin' 'em they're all in love with her. She's a wonder, she is! Compressed air ain't nothin' to her!"

Yet there were uncharitable people who said that, inasmuch as the new teacher was 'Squire Rambo's wife's cousin, and boarded at his house, his views concerning her were not strictly impartial; and who hinted, also, that better results would be produced in the school were the transitions on the part of the teacher in the management of her charges from effusive affection to severe castigation less sudden and less frequent.

That the children whom Mary Wade alternately petted and whipped entertained any great amount of love for her may be questioned; but there was no room for questioning the fact that most of the young men of the town fell in love with her on sight. As a whole, this outburst of tender passion received no great amount of encouragement. When, in individual cases, it came to the logical climax of a proposal in form it was decisively checked. According to the gossip of the town, Hardy was the only lover of them all whom Mary really favored; and yet he was the very last of them all who gave her the chance to act in his case finally.

He went at his love-making in the same quiet way that he went at his fighting; and with the same tremendous energy and the same fixed determination to win. His method was so very quiet, indeed, that several months passed before Mary at all realized its underlying

earnestness and force. His attitude toward her, as she believed, was friendly rather than lover-like; and she found his brotherliness, as she called it, a welcome relief from the very aggressive love-making of the numerous young miners whose picks and hearts were laid as votive offerings at her feet. She grew to be confidential with him, telling him some of the funny incidents of her various courtships; and over these they laughed together, comfortably. She fell into the habit, also, of telling him about her worries with the school-children, and of counting upon his advice and sympathy. When the spring opened, they took walks together through the meadows and in the woods on Sunday afternoons—professedly that she might teach him what little she knew about botany.

As the spring wore away and summer drew near, they talked less and less about botany during these walks, and more about themselves. He told her, as a great secret, of his hopes and plans for the future. His ambition was not a very vaulting one; he meant to work his way up until he was superintendent of the Company's store, with a salary of three thousand dollars a year. This was quite enough for two people to live on comfortably, he said. Mary felt a queer little pang of something like jealousy as she wondered who the second one of these two people would be; but she only answered that on three thousand dollars a year two people would be able to live very comfortably indeed.

It was on this occasion that she came very near telling him a certain secret of her own; but before she quite had nerved herself to this undertaking their talk had slipped off in another direction, and her oppor-

tunity was lost. It did not come again; perhaps she did not try very vigorously to make it come. Down in the depths of her heart lay the conviction—though she persistently refused to recognize it—that with the telling of her secret her idyl of a brotherly and a sisterly friendship would come suddenly to an end. She was not behaving well, this blue-eyed school-mistress; and she did not improve her moral standing in the case, especially after that talk about two people living on three thousand dollars a year, by continuing her friendship with Hardy on its highly factitious brotherly and sisterly basis. For the fact of the matter was that through all the time of her philandering with Hardy she was engaged to be married to another man.

The spring days went by quickly, and—in spite of her twinges of conscience, which she did her best to ignore—Mary found them very delightful. The more that Hardy's character was made plain to her—it was a simple, sturdy character, easy to understand—the more she liked him and respected him. He was a man all the way through; and for her, with her lack of will-power, and her tendency to shirk responsibility, there was a restful comfort in his steadfastness and manly strength. She fairly acknowledged to herself that had she met him before she met the lover to whom her word was pledged she gladly would have married him. But, while admitting this much, she still refused to face the fact that he was seriously in love with her; still pretended to herself that his affection for her was of the brotherly sort that would continue when she was married. She applied the logic of analogy to the situation, reasoning that since her marriage would not

change her feeling toward him it would not change his feeling toward her.

Of course, a dream so hopelessly at odds with the realities of life as this dream was could not last. One Sunday afternoon in June—the school would close that week, and then she would go back to Wilksbarré for the summer—there came to them the shock of waking. That day they had made no pretense of botanizing. They had walked a mile or so across the meadow-lands to a wood growing on a part of the mountain-side that as yet was unprofaned by coal-pits and breakers; and where, high up above the valley, a ledge of rock jutted out in a great terrace. Here they had settled themselves in a nook where the rock formed a natural seat, that became a luxurious lounging-place when cushioned with sweet-fern and covered with Mary's shawl. They themselves had discovered this place, and they regarded it as peculiarly their own.

The day was a very perfect one. The sky was a pale turquoise blue, unflecked by a single cloud—save that off to the eastward a soft, delicious haze hung lightly above the distant mountain-crests. Out of the southeast a warm wind was blowing, gently, languorously. A flood of warm spring sunshine fell on the thick forest growth about them, and, filtering through the network of leaves and branches, flecked the brown rocks and browner earth with patches of golden light. Far below them, winding through the green meadows, the Susquehanna gleamed like a broad band of silver—that grew narrower and less and less silvery until it was lost in the distance in a faint streak of gray. The only sounds which came to them were the soft sighings of the gentle



wind among the trees; a chattering now and then of squirrels; the low throbbing of a pump at some distant mine. Mary had brought a volume of poems with her, Dr. Holland's "Bitter-Sweet," and Hardy had been reading from it aloud.

"What a wonderful poet he is!" she said, as Hardy laid down the book. "Isn't it wonderful how he tells things just as they really are? Now about that cider: it's as true as true can be! When the 'Squire got in a barrel last fall, and I went down cellar to look at it, it was 'working'—all frothing at the bung-hole—just as he says it does in the poem. I've read a great deal of poetry, but I never saw that fact about cider 'working' brought out that way before. Did you?"

"No," Hardy answered, "I never did. What a lot of it they had—sixteen barrels! Must have kept it for sale, I guess." There was a strain of effort in his tone as he spoke. Obviously the subject did not interest him—not even in its commercial aspect. Mary ventured one or two commendatory remarks upon the poet and the poem, to which he did not even in this perfunctory fashion reply. Then she too was silent. But the silence was not of that easy sort that comes when two people do not speak because each understands and follows the other's thought. It was an unrestful silence, that had in it the feeling of the stillness which precedes a storm. The steady beating of the distant pump seemed to come nearer and to grow more clear. Mary felt a shiver run through her, although the air was soft and warm.

She would not turn toward him, but she knew that his brown eyes were fixed upon her, and that in them

was a look of eagerness—almost of command. Until now she had succeeded, after a fashion, in hiding from herself what she instinctively knew all the while was the truth. Now the truth was forced home to her, so strongly that evasion of it was impossible: that this love which she refused to recognize, or recognized and called brotherly, was of the masterful sort that only possession would satisfy. She grew very pale; her breath came and went irregularly; she trembled a little—the throbbing of the distant pump filled her ears with a dull, suffocating sound that in some confused way made itself a part of the beating of her own heart. It seemed to her that for years they thus sat silent. At last, very simply, Hardy spoke:

“Will you marry me, Mary?”

She started violently. In a moment she began to cry. Hardy drew toward her, but she motioned him away.

“O John, please—I’m so very sorry! I—I ought to have told you. *Haven’t* I told you? I’m—I’m engaged to be married, John.” Then she fell to crying again.

After a while, without raising her head, she went on: “Won’t you forgive me, John? Indeed, I’m sorry. *Please* forgive me!”

He was silent.

“Have you nothing to say to comfort me?” she asked at last, looking up to him with her pretty blue eyes full of tears. When she saw his face a thrill of fright went through her, his look was so hard and stern.

“Nothing,” he answered; and added: “We had better go home now, I think.”

"You are very cruel," she said; but she put her hand upon the rocky ledge above her head and slowly raised herself to her feet. There was a curious rattling sound that caused her to turn her head quickly. She gave a cry of terror. Close beside her hand was a rattlesnake, ready coiled to spring. It had come out on the warm rock to sun itself, and had been there, no doubt, all the while close beside them. Hardy, as the sound caused him to turn sharply, perceived her peril. Like a flash, he caught her in his arms and snatched her away. At the same instant the snake sprang, striking so strongly that—missing her hand—it slid over the edge of the rock and disappeared among the fallen leaves and undergrowth in the depth below.

Mary lay weak, almost fainting, in Hardy's arms. He carried her to a spring near by, and there with the cold water bathed her wrists and temples. As she rested in his arms he had a curious feeling that the body that he thus held was a corpse. Presently the cold water revived her. She stood upright and said that she felt strong enough to walk. With his arm supporting her, they went together slowly down the mountain-side. Thick clouds were rising rapidly before a chill wind that had begun to blow out of the northeast. The sun was hidden. The valley was cold and gray. Over all nature had come a desolate change.

By the time that they reached the level land below, she was strong enough to walk alone. During their descent neither of them had spoken. In silence they went on until they came to Squire Rambo's house, and in silence he turned to leave her.

"You are not going away like that—without a word?" she said.

"What is there to say?" he asked.

"That you forgive me. Oh, tell me that you forgive me, John! I'm so very, *very* sorry. Indeed I am. You will forgive me, won't you, dear John?"

Hardy looked at her keenly, and the expression upon his face was not a pleasant one. Then he spoke; slowly and steadily at first, but with a vehemence that increased as his rage increased by giving vent to it:

"You have spoiled my life for me, Mary," he said, "and without any reason at all. The harm that you have done me would not have been done if you had told me three months ago what you have told me to-day. And now that the harm *is* done, done needlessly, wickedly, you want me 'to forgive you' for doing it! Well, I tell you plainly, I'll see you damned first! Is that plain enough for you? Do you want anything plainer than that? You can faint if you want to"—Mary suddenly had turned very white, and almost had fallen as she stepped back and leaned against the door-jamb for support—"for it's a matter to faint over. A man has only one life, and the woman who spoils it for him as you have spoiled my life for me has a good deal to answer for. Yes, faint if you want to—it's the best thing you can do.

"Good-by! I'm going away. I'm going out of this altogether, so that I'll never lay eyes on you again—and I wish to God I'd never laid eyes on you at all! But, remember, you have brought a curse on my life, and I leave a curse on yours. Sooner or later you will feel the weight of it, mark my words!"

Hardy's quiet, almost stolid, nature was stirred to its depths with rage. A great wrong had been put upon him, and he resented it with the reckless fury natural to a man of his temperament when once he fairly loses himself in a passionate outburst of unbridled wrath. Mary cowered before him—white, trembling, stunned.

So he parted from her—and that very night he left the town.

### III.

Thus, then, was the turn of fortune that had driven Hardy down to the Southwestern frontier and that had made him a wanderer there.

Being cast out into the wilderness, life had no good in it for him and he valued it lightly; and so was ready to take the risks which, after all, in that rough region led most surely to safety. He was more than ready to fight anybody, and he was rather surprised—after engaging in a few passages at arms, in which he came out on top—by finding how few people wanted to fight him. At first there was a strong probability that he would go to the bad, and that his end would be a sudden one at the hands of a vigilance committee or a sheriff's *posse*. But gradually, as he rallied from the shock that his moral nature had sustained, his old habits of steadiness and self-control returned to him, and the dangerous corner was safely turned. He did honest work and he worked hard; but he found that he could not work long in any one place nor at any one thing. He tried ranching for a while, and got the hang of Spanish from the Mexican herdsmen; he ran a store in a little town; he picked up telegraphy and took charge

of a railway station ; he drove a stage ; he managed an express-office—only by keeping his mind stirred by frequent change could he save himself from falling into a brooding melancholy over the past.

Yet, as time wore on, much of the bitterness that had filled his heart slowly died out of it. His rage against the woman who had befooled him of his love, when she had no like love to give him in return, by degrees abated until it well-nigh ceased to have existence. One day, coming upon some sentimental verses in an old newspaper, he was surprised by finding that he was thinking tenderly of Mary—and of the time when she had taken these very verses out of her pocket-book and had read them to him, one of those Sunday afternoons back in the past. And then the memory of her as he had left her—cowering, fainting, withered, in the doorway of the Rambo house—came strongly upon him and sent a thrill of shame and sorrow through his heart. For the first time it occurred to him that what, until that moment, he had regarded as only a strong but justifiable expression of his righteous wrath had been in truth an outburst of unqualified brutality. He comforted himself by the reflection that it had been a bad business all the way through ; that, if he had done wrong, there certainly had been a good deal in the situation to justify his wrong-doing. There was enough of truth in this view of the matter to make his defensive position a tenable one, and he hung on to it. He had not yet forgiven the wrong that had been done him ; but he had passed a long way beyond the stage in which his only feeling was a bitter anger that made him long for revenge. Now and then he found himself wonder-

ing what had happened to Mary in the two years that had dragged so heavily for him since he left her. Very likely they had gone fast enough for her. By this time, no doubt, she had been a year or so married. He did not like to think of this probability. He preferred to think that some accident had intervened and that the marriage had fallen through. And then, sometimes, he would wonder what would happen should a turn of chance bring them together again.

Thus another year went by, during which time the tonic to soul and body that he found in his hard work and in his rough life tended still more to restore his moral equilibrium. But his heart-wound was not as yet entirely healed, and his only desire was to continue his aimless existence until a fuller forgetfulness should come. And this was his state when, drifting down to the border in search of a fresh job, he accepted the offered berth of station-master at Santa María de los Ángeles. That the berth was a rough one, and that there was a chance for fighting connected with it, he considered to be its strongest attractions.

#### IV.

THE superintendent was going down the line on a special, and he took Hardy along. They had a clear track, and made the run of fifty miles to Santa María in a trifle over two hours. The last five miles was all down-grade, from a high divide to the point where the track crossed the broad valley of the little river on a long trestle. At the southern end of the trestle was the tank. The pump was down below, beside the stream,

and hidden by the high bank. Three or four hundred yards farther down the line was the station—a little frame building painted dark brown. It looked hopelessly out of place, and desperately hot and uncomfortable under the blazing Mexican sun. Away to the left, on the bluff above the stream, was the town—a cluster of shabby *adobe* houses, built irregularly about the old chapel. It was a dusty, dirty, dreary-looking place, without a shrub or tree for shelter against the fierce heat of the sun. The only visible signs of life were a few naked children bathing in the river and some ill-favored dogs drowsing beside the houses in narrow strips of shade.

A great plain covered with cactus growth and studded with *pita* palms stretched away toward the distant mountains in the east—the very realization of arid desolateness. Across this plain, a yellow, dusty streak, went the trail leading to the mines. An American company had bought these mines, and in a desultory fashion was working them. It was for the encouragement of the American company—it needed encouragement badly—that the station of Santa María had been established.

Hardy was not as much discouraged by the looks of his prospective home as a man fresh from the States would have been. He had lived in some pretty hard places during the past three years, and he had come to know that in towns quite as ill-looking as Santa María was there were possibilities of comparative comfort. Like all men who have become familiar with the Southwest, the sight of water cheered him—for running water is a mighty solace in a hot land. The refreshing wonders



which water can work were shown at Santa María by a delectably green expanse of a dozen acres or so stretching along the lower slopes of the hillsides beyond the town—the cultivated ground that drew its life from a great *acéquia* fed from the river. It did Hardy's heart good to see this bit of green.

The engine slowed up as it neared the bottom of the long down-grade, and stopped beside the tank. The gauge showed that the tank was full, but the pump was at work. In a moment the pump stopped, and then a man came out from the engine-house and climbed up the steep bank. When he got on level ground he walked toward them in a slouching fashion that was in keeping with his surly manner when he got near enough to speak. He was a tall man, heavily and strongly built. His black hair and beard, his dark eyes and dark skin, gave him the look of a Mexican.

"What the devil—" he began, and then stopped as he saw the superintendent.

"What are you running that pump for when your tank is full?" the superintendent asked, sharply.

"I ain't runnin' it. It's stopped. I've just filled her. If I'd run after she was full there'd be water under the escape, wouldn't there? Well, there ain't any. Look for yourself."

It struck Hardy that the man was very eager to make this point in his own favor. If the same thought struck the superintendent, he kept it to himself.

"All right," he said. "But you burn a lot of wood, all the same." And then he added with a touch of that odd formalism that leads certain classes of

Americans to refer to each other as "gentlemen," and to adopt on occasion ceremonious forms of address by no means in keeping with their normal speech: "Mr. William Barwood, let me make you acquainted with Mr. John Hardy. Mr. Hardy is the gentleman who is going to take charge of the station, you know. I want you to do what you can to make things pleasant for him."

Barwood looked sharply at Hardy for a moment; then, dropping his eyes, he shambled up to him and held out his hand.

"Shake," he said.

Hardy shook.

There was a gratifying friendliness in this demonstration; but it did not prevent Hardy from entertaining the possibly unreasonable notion that what this man really wanted to do was to stick a knife into him.

"As for makin' things pleasant for Mr. Hardy," Barwood answered, "or for anybody else in this hell-hole, I can't say that the prospect's promisin'. But I'll do what I can for him to make it a little less stinkin'. S'pose we go up to th' station an' I'll turn things over to him—though besides twelve blank tickets and th' way-book and a kerosene-lamp I guess there ain't anything in partic'lar t' turn.

"You'll bunk in the station, Mr. Hardy, I s'pose. I did at first. Now, I've got a house over in th' town. You can feed with us if you want to—an' I guess my wife won't be sorry to have somebody t' talk to. She can't get th' talkin' hang of th' language, she says—but I guess her real trouble is she won't try. I got a teacher, you see, an' I learned good enough t' talk all

I wanted in six months. You speak th' language, I s'pose?"

"I can worry along," Hardy answered.

"Oh, you'll be all right, then—at least as right as anybody can be in such a hole as Santa María. I don't know where I'd find a white man's dog, let alone a white man, that 'u'd stay here if he wasn't paid to. Come along t' th' station now, an' we'll attend t' th' transfer. An' then we'll go over t' th' house an' have somethin' t' eat. I can't promise you much, but it'll be th' best that's t' be had about here." Turning to one of the group of boys collected about the locomotive, he added: "Hello, there, you José, *anda a la Señora y dele yo tengo el Señor Superintendente y otro caballero para la comida.*"

The superintendent declined this hospitable offer. He was going farther down the line, he said, and could not stop.

Hardy rapidly was arriving at the conclusion that in sizing this man up he had made a mistake. From the standpoint of the frontier his manners were the embodiment of politeness. He was frank and he was hospitable. It was a pleasant surprise, moreover, to find that there was an American woman in the outfit. Excepting casual talks with the Greasers, who did not count, Hardy scarcely had said a dozen words to a woman during the whole of the past three years. Altogether he found the prospect of a bearable existence in Santa María enlarging in a very satisfactory manner. Unless some row broke out about the waste of wood at the pump, which he was beginning to think was not likely, there was no reason why he should not be fairly

comfortable in this little Mexican town. The presence of an abnormal number of hard characters did not bother him. Having that lofty contempt for Greaser toughs that characterizes the frontier American, he was not at all afraid that he could not hold his own. All that he would have to guard against were knife-thrusts in the back and shots in the dark. He had been successful at various times in the past in taking precautions against annoyances of this nature, and he felt reasonably confident that he could continue to take adequate precautions against them in the future.

The locomotive watered at the tank and came on to the station. When the transfer of valuable property was completed, the superintendent entered his car, and the special pulled out for the southward. Hardy and Barwood watched it sliding away down the track, the steam rising faintly in the hot air, and a long trail of black smoke hanging almost motionless above the lines of rails.

"I'll go over t' th' house an' see about dinner," Barwood said. "I guess my wife understood what José told her; but she ain't sharp about th' language, an' maybe she didn't. There'll be nothin' t' do till th' 4.10 passes, so you can fix yourself. You've got blankets, I see, an' you'll find a cot in th' inside room. There's a basin there, too, an' I'll send one o' these lazy devils down t' th' tank t' bring you a bucket of water. I'll come back for you in half an hour or so, or send one of th' boys over. It'll be a little less like hell for hotness in here if you'll open that back door. I don't believe you've ever been in a hotter place 'an Santa María; I never have. But there's one good thing about it, it's

always cool at night—gets cool right away after th' sun sets, when th' wind begins t' blow down from th' hills."

Barwood walked off through the hot sunshine. Hardy carried his roll of blankets, and the battered black oilcloth bag that held the remainder of his personal belongings, into the inner room; opened the back door, and tried to fancy that the waves of heat which slowly drifted in at one door and out at the other made an atmosphere a trifle less baking than that of the solid heat outside. He seated himself on a rickety chair and lighted a pipe. Presently a boy brought the promised bucket of water. It was lukewarm; but washing even in lukewarm water was refreshing. In the course of half an hour the boy came again and said that dinner was ready. Hardy closed and locked the doors and followed him. The ground was hot beneath his feet. The weight of the hot air through which he walked oppressed him. Over the broad stretch of cactus-covered plain the rays of heat reflected from the ground rose shimmering.

The boy led the way to an *adobe* house that stood beside the partly ruined chapel. It had been the priest's house in the time when a priest had ministered regularly in Santa María, and stood upon the very site of the little hut in which the first of the Mission Fathers had dwelt three centuries and more before. It was larger and in better repair than the houses near by, and it possessed the further dignity of a small window set high up in the side wall and protected by wooden bars. As he passed beneath this window Hardy distinctly heard these words:

“—— an’ if you open your fool mouth an’ let out a single word, I’ll knife you!”

This curious utterance fell upon his ears so suddenly that he had turned the corner of the house before he fairly had grasped the meaning of it. “*Por aqui, Señor,*” said the boy, pointing to the open door. The sound of his footsteps must have been heard inside, for as he reached the doorway Barwood met him.

“Hot enough for you comin’ across? Dinner’s ready. My wife’s just cleanin’ herself. Here she is now. Mr. Hardy, let me make you acquainted—

“What th’ h—l’s th’ matter with you now?”

This abrupt break in Mr. Barwood’s formal introduction, and still more abrupt transition to his customary vigorous colloquial manner, were not without cause; for the woman advancing toward them from the inside room—whom Hardy, coming from the glaring sunshine into the scantily lighted house, saw but dimly—gave a cry of fright or surprise, and then, pressing her hands upon her breast, sank down into a chair.

In a moment Hardy saw clearly, but he did not recognize her. Then she looked up at him and spoke:

“Don’t you know me, John?”

Her eyes had not changed, nor had her voice; though the tone of sorrow in it was strange to him. It was Mary Wade.

“Mary! You!” was all that he could say.

“Well, there don’t seem t’ be no very drivin’ need of my introducin’ you,” Barwood struck in. “Knowed each other back in th’ States, I s’pose. Like enough you’re the man Mary told me she shook just afore she come West. I didn’t pay much attention t’ th’ matter

when she told me about it, for I got her, all th' same ; an' I sha'n't pay much attention to it now, for I've got her still. An' I won't say which of us has th' most t' be thankful for, either.—Mary, when you think you've looked like a stuck pig long enough, just get up, will you, an' let's have dinner."

Hardy felt the blood come up into his face, and his hands closed into fists ; but a look from Mary made him restrain his strong desire to knock Barwood down and then kick him.

"It—it was such a surprise, Will," she said, speaking in a humble tone that increased Hardy's pugnacity. "I never expected to see Mr. Hardy out here, you know, and his coming in suddenly that way upset me. I'm all right now"—she was very white, and she rose slowly and with difficulty. "We'll have dinner right away. I'm sorry I kept you waiting." She walked, a little unsteadily, to the stove that stood in one corner of the room, and thence brought the dinner to the table.

"It's not much of a dinner, Mr. Hardy," she said, with an obvious effort to make talk, "not like what we used to have at home ; there's not much of anything down here that seems like home. Have you heard from home lately ?"

The shock of this meeting had been more severe to Hardy, even, than it had been to Mary. Save that his rough life had roughened him a little, she saw him unchanged. But the change that Hardy saw in her was a pitiable one. All her freshness and look of youth had gone from her. She was pale and thin and worn. He had thought of her always as the very embodiment of neatness, but now her dress was careless and her beau-

tiful gold-brown hair was knotted anyhow upon her head. Seeing her thus, Hardy found added to the moral wrench given him by this sudden rousing of a sorrow that he had believed was dead, the keen pain that came of knowing that only through bitter trials of flesh and spirit could she have been so changed. And there was great pathos to him in her dwelling so strongly on that word "home." It was with difficulty that he could control himself sufficiently to speak. But he perceived that she was right in forcing commonplace talk, and he tried to help her. Barwood maintained an ugly silence.

"It isn't much like the Wyoming Valley down here, and that's a fact," Hardy said, trying to speak with heartiness. "But I've been around in these parts so long now—in New Mexico and Arizona, you know—that I've got pretty well used to it. And I've got to liking the Mexicans, too. They're lazy and dirty, and a good many of 'em are hard cases, I know; but there's something pleasant about them, for all. You ought to learn the language. It makes all the difference in getting along with them when you know the language. Your husband tells me that he got a teacher. Now, why don't you get a teacher too?"

"Yes," Mary answered, speaking slowly. "My husband did get a—teacher—" She stopped suddenly, as Barwood shot a look at her across the table. Hardy did not see this by-play. Then she went on: "Well, there's a good deal in what you say, and maybe I'll try. But I'm not good for much at study nowadays, I'm afraid. I don't believe that even 'Squire Rambo would think that I was fit to be a school-mistress now, Mr.



Hardy." She tried to smile as she said this, but her lips quivered.

"What good beans these are!"—Hardy was rather desperate—"they're as good as the Mexicans cook them, *Frijoles* are about the best thing the Mexicans turn out, according to my mind. You oughtn't to call yourself stupid when you can cook beans so well, Ma—Mrs. Barwood."

"She didn't cook 'em," Barwood interposed. "One of our—a Mexican friend of ours sent 'em in to us. Mary's not a bad cook, but only a Mexican can cook beans as good as these. Take some more."

"I'm glad, anyway, Mrs. Barwood, that you've got some Mexican friends," Hardy went on. "It must make things ever so much pleasanter for you, even if you don't speak the language. Their sending things in this way is just like the Mexicans. They certainly are a good-natured lot, just as I was saying."

Mary was about to reply, when another look from her husband—Hardy saw it this time—made her remain silent. There was an awkward pause.

Hardy was sitting with his back to the open door. Mary sat facing it. Suddenly he saw that she was growing pale. At the same moment he heard a footstep, and then some one called—the voice was very sweet and soft—"Guillermo!"

Hardy turned involuntarily, and the sight of the woman whom he saw standing in the doorway fairly took away his breath. She was one of those magnificent creatures who not infrequently are met with among the common people of Mexico: a typical descendant of the sturdy Spaniards of the sixteenth century (very dif-

ferent from the degenerate race that peoples Spain to-day) and of the softer race whom the Spaniards conquered in Mexico. She was tall, vigorous, stately; but her strong, free action of body and limb was full of grace, and her stately air was softened by a seducing tenderness. As she stood there in the doorway—partly in shadow and partly in sunlight—the large, beautiful lines of her figure standing out sharply against the glaring background of the sun-bathed *adobe* wall of the old church, one bare arm half raised, her body partly turned as she started back on seeing a stranger, she seemed to Hardy less a real woman than a woman in a bewildering dream.

The vision lasted only for a moment. “Go now, Juana,” Barwood said in Spanish; and added: “Later.”

When Hardy turned again Mary’s face no longer was white; it was as red as fire. She rose from the table hastily and went into the inner room. Barwood and Hardy finished their meal in silence. As they got up from the table Barwood said, with rather a forced air of ease: “Try a *cigarrito*? They’re pretty good ones.”

“No, I’m obliged. I guess I’ll stick to a pipe,” Hardy answered.

“Yes, I s’pose that’s th’ way you feel now. I used t’ feel that way about *cigarritos* myself. But now that I’ve fairly got into th’ way of ’em I don’t care much t’ smoke anythin’ else. It’s a good plan when you’re in a foreign country t’ try t’ do what’s done by th’ folks that live there. I can’t go all th’ Mexican ways, but I try t’ take in as many of ’em as I can.”

“Yes,” Hardy answered, dryly, “so I see.”

Barwood gave him a sharp look, and for a moment seemed disposed to give him a sharp answer; but he thought better of it.

"I'm comin' over t' th' station after a while, an' then we can have a talk an' settle things. Things is pretty much as I left 'em at th' station when I moved out, and I guess you'll find what you want. But if there's anything you want that ain't there, let me know; it's likely I won't have it either—but I might. We don't go in much for style down here, an' you'll have t' get along th' best you can."

Hardy was puzzled by this fresh display of friendliness. It bothered him a little, too, for the thing that he most wanted to do just then was to get Barwood off somewhere and mash him into a jelly and then shoot him. It was annoying to find this generous intention checked in the way that Barwood was checking it. Nobody feels like thrashing a man, still less like sending a bullet through him, when he really seems to be trying, according to his lights, to be amiable. Hardy only could hope that this ill-timed display of good-will would disappear when they were alone together. As he lighted his pipe and turned to leave the house, Mary came into the room again. She had regained her composure, and when she spoke it was in a quiet, even voice.

"Will tells me that you are going to board with us, Mr. Hardy. You'll find it pretty poor board, I'm afraid; but I don't feel as bad about it as I would if I didn't know that it'll be better than anybody else here can give you—at least, I mean, it'll be more like what you're used to getting in the States." There was a touch of apology in her tone, and a half-deprecat-  
ing

look toward her husband as she made this correction. "We have supper at six."

She came closer to him as she spoke, and as her husband turned to pick up a box of matches from the table she pressed a scrap of crumpled paper into his hand. When he opened this paper he read: "Don't have words with him. It will only make things worse for me."

## V.

HARDY walked back through the blazing heat to the station and—after taking a look at his revolver to see that it was in good working order and that all the chambers were loaded—settled himself with a pipe to await Barwood's coming.

This was the time of day when the sun was most powerful and when all nature seemed to be crushed into stillness by the heavy weight of heat. Not a sign of animal life anywhere was to be seen. The doors of the *adobe* houses were shut tight, and within them, in coolness and darkness, their owners lay slumbering. The very dogs had betaken themselves to such shelter from the sun as they could find in the *chaparral* or beneath the bluff, and were slumbering too. The pine boards of the station sent out a resinous smell. The iron of the railway was blistering hot. Not a breath of air stirred. Over the great plain hung a shimmering haze made up of the direct and reflected rays of heat. But there was promise of coolness later on, for over on the foot-hills little whirlwinds of dust, *remolinos*, already were beginning to form—the advance-guard of the fresh, cool wind that would sweep down from the mountains when the set-

ting of the sun should bring to an end the long, hot day.

Hardy did not notice the heat. He was thinking of Mary, and a great sorrow for her had taken possession of his heart. Misery she certainly had brought into his life; but nothing in comparison with the misery that had come into her own. It was bad enough, he thought, that she should have been married to Barwood at his best—whatever that might have been—but that she should be tied to Barwood now seemed altogether horrible. As the picture of the Mexican girl standing in the doorway came before his mind, he ground out a curse between his teeth. And the worst of it was that he did not see what he could do—unless he shot Barwood off-hand—to make her case better. She was right, he perceived, in warning him not to fall to wrangling with her husband. This was a matter in which half-way measures would be worse than useless. Between the extremes of killing Barwood and of keeping up a show of friendly relations with him there was no safe course. Much as there was tempting about the more radical of these lines of conduct, he decided that for the present Mary's interests would be best served by not adopting it. For some reason that he did not at all understand, Barwood evidently was disposed to avoid a rupture with him; all that was necessary, therefore, was that he should hold himself well in hand and not make one until he could make one that would be decisive and final. The wisdom of present temporizing was enforced, further, by the fact that until he could see Mary alone and talk freely with her he could not arrange any certain plan for her relief. Yes, he must wait.

While he was working the matter over in his mind he sat on the one chair that the station possessed, tipping back on its hind-legs, his hands clasped behind his head, smoking slowly. In an absent, half-seeing way his eyes ranged over the group of *adobe* houses, the great sunny plain beyond, the gray-blue mountains which formed the horizon on the east. It was odd, he thought, that all his wanderings should have ended in bringing him to the very woman whom he had tried to get farthest away from. He traced back in his mind the chain of accidents, very trifling most of them, which had moved him from place to place in Arizona and New Mexico, and which finally had led him to this little town of Santa María, where Mary was. Was there such a thing as Fate? he thought.

After a while he saw Barwood come out of one of the *adobe* houses—not his own—and walk toward the station. Hardy moved his chair to the other door. He did not want Barwood to know that he had seen him come out of that other house.

“Hot enough for you?” Barwood asked as he entered the station

“Yes, I guess it’ll do for the present,” Hardy answered.

“How about things? Can I do anythin’ t’ settle you?”

“No, things are all right. I’ll get along; much obliged.”

Barwood seated himself on an empty nail-keg—the one other piece of furniture, excepting the table on which was placed the telegraph instrument, that the station possessed—and rolled a *cigarrito*. He did this

deftly, and Hardy noticed that the thumb and forefinger of his right hand were as yellow from smoke as a Mexican's. He drew a paper box of double-headed wax matches from his pocket, struck one, lighted his *cigarrito*, carefully returned the unused end of the match to the box, and then smoked for a while in silence. At last he said, looking away from Hardy as he spoke, and shifting his legs a little uneasily: "I guess, Mr. Hardy, you an' me'd better have a talk."

"Yes," Hardy answered, "maybe we had."

"About—about Mary, you know. Mary tells me that you really are the man she shook, back in the States. I sized it up that way, you know, on sight. I guess she played it pretty low down on you."

"Never mind about that. It's all over. It was over three years ago. I was a good deal of a fool myself about that time. I ought to have begun by asking her if she was free."

"Excuse *me*, she ought to have begun by tellin' you that she had another man on her string. I'd better tell you just how things between me and Mary begun. You see, I was fireman to th' hoistin'-engine out at Sugar Notch—at Wilkesbarré, you know—an' Mary was livin' with her step-mother an' just beginnin' t' teach school. I guess she had a mean time of it at home. Her father was dead, an' from what I saw of her step-mother I didn't take much stock in her. She was a tough one, an' no mistake. So Mary was more'n glad t' take up with me. I guess she did love me—I loved her, I know. So I told her I'd go West an' make some money; an' just then she got that teachin' job down in your town, an' was able t' get away from her step-mother. So

things sort of suited all round. So I come out to Fort Worth an' got a pretty good job as engineer—I'd learned pretty well how to run an engine—an' things in gen'ral looked promisin'.

“ Well, Mary kep' writin' reg'lar, tellin' me she was all right, an' makin' fun of th' boys bein' in love with her. She used t' write a good deal about you, sayin' you was like a brother to her. Then her letters begun t' get sort of queer; an' then, all of a sudden, I got one askin' me if I'd marry her right off if she'd come out t' me. I struck my boss for more pay, an' got it, an' wrote back I would, an' glad to. So out she come, an' we got married. She looked mis'erable, an' said she'd been sick. Somehow she wasn't like herself, an' we didn't get along very well. She sort of moped, like as if she had th' toothache; an' was kind of high-strung an' offish, as if I wasn't good enough for her. Things got sort of worse an' worse, an' now an' then I'd go off with th' boys an' try t' forget what a cussed mean time I was havin' at home. She didn't like that, an' was downright ugly when I'd come home a little sewed up. At last she told me I was a drunken brute an' she was sorry she'd married me, 'specially as she could 'a' got a better man. She meant you, I guess. Well, we didn't have a pleasant time that day, for I just got mad an' talked square up to her. After that things was a good deal worse. I took t' goin' with th' boys more'n ever, an' pretty soon I found myself fired out of my job. Mary said she'd been expectin' it; an' I told her that th' one most t' blame for 't was herself—an' that was just th' everlastin' truth.

“ Well, we pulled out of Fort Worth, an' I braced



up an' I got another job—down in San Anton' that was. Then it was pretty much th' same thing over again. Then we went up to Waco, an' then across to Harrison, an' then down t' Palestine, an' to Houston, an' to Galveston. I had good jobs in ev'ry one of them towns, an' I got fired out of 'em all. An' at last I got this job here. I guess you can see for yourself what a d——n mean job this looks like, an' can guess it must 'a' been pretty cold weather for me when I agreed t' take it. But in some ways—that maybe we'll talk about later—it's turned out better than I sized it up to. For one thing, there ain't any boys here for me t' tear around with, an' when I get set up on *mescal* there ain't anybody t' report me—an' it don't make no difference t' anybody, either, 's long as I keep my tank full.

“Now, that's th' whole business. I wanted t' talk things out square with you, an I've done it. Maybe, now you know what kind of a life Mary's led me, you're not as sorry as you was that when we both was snappin' at her she hung fire with you an' went off with me.

“What I want t' say now is: I'm ready to try t' make things as good as I can for you here, but I want you t' play square with me. If I happen to get set up sometimes, don't you run yourself into a shooting-match—for that's what it'll come to, an' d——n quick, too—by reportin' me; an' don't you believe th' whole of th' pack of lies about me that Mary's loaded up with, an' is goin' t' fire off at you as soon as she gets th' chance. Let's fix things to run along easy this way; an' after a while, when I know you better, maybe I can show you some things about Santa María that'll make you think 'tain't as bad as it looks. It ain't always in

th' best-looking places that there's th' most money t' be made. What do you say? Is it a go?"

Hardy's pipe was out. He lighted it and smoked for a while before answering.

"I don't see that you and I need have any row in partic'lar," he said at last. "I won't make any promises until I look around a little and see how things are. But you needn't worry about my reporting you so long as you keep your tank full, and don't let anything get wrong with the pump. If you don't do your work I'll report you, dead sure; and if you come around after shooting-matches, I'll give you all you want, and some to spare. About the size of it is, that unless you make a row there won't be one. Does that suit you?"

"Y-e-e-e-s," Barwood answered, "that's fair enough t' start with. I guess you an' me'll get along—unless Mary won't let us. I'll do my part, anyway. Now, I must go down t' th' pump. Th' 4.10, th' freight, 'll be along pretty soon. There's some bullion comin' down t' day from San Gabriel, but it don't go up on th' freight. It goes up in th' express-car to-night. This bit of shafting goes on th' freight. Here's the way-book. An' just tell Sanders, will you, t' tell Ward t' send down my spare connectin'-rod. Tell him there'll be th' devil t' pay here at th' pump some day if he don't send it."

Hardy stood at the door of the station and watched Barwood as he walked up the track to the tank, and so beyond it down into the valley of the stream. Presently the steady throbbing of the pump sounded through the hot stillness. Hardy's mind was so full of other things that it did not occur to him that since the tank was full there was no reason for keeping the pump going. He

seated himself again on the rickety chair and smoked slowly. What Barwood had told him—and he did not doubt that in a general way Barwood had spoken the truth—enabled him to see pretty clearly what had happened: how Mary, stung by anger, and no doubt also stirred by the thought that she had not treated her first lover fairly, had urged the hasty marriage as a sort of reparation, and in the hope that such decisive action would bring her calmness and rest. And he could see how the same weakness of nature that had brought her into such false relations with himself, and that had hurried her into this atonement, had prevented her from accepting as final the finality that she herself had brought about. Barwood certainly had a good deal to answer for; but Hardy was forced to the conviction that Mary was largely responsible for the condition that Barwood was reduced to, and, consequently, for her own unhappiness. It was curious, he thought, that this woman should have succeeded through sheer folly in wrecking the lives of two men.

Yet even in the face of the fact that Mary had mainly herself to blame for the evil fate that had overtaken her, his pity for her was most keenly aroused. In his otherwise frank talk Barwood had not touched upon the Mexican girl—the cruelest wrong that Mary had suffered. Hardy had refrained from forcing the talk in this direction, for he doubted his ability, should this subject be touched upon, to control his rage—and he was firmly determined to stave off a crisis until he could act decisively for Mary's good. That a crisis must come, and must come soon, he fully realized. The situation was altogether too volcanic to be lasting; and

the chances seemed to be strongly in favor of its finding an appropriately energetic culmination. That there would be some shooting in it struck Hardy as highly probable, and he found this probability soothing. He let his hand drop to his hip pocket and wondered who would come out on top. He was inclined to believe that it would be himself.

The arrival of the up train cut short his reverie. A little while after it had gone up the line, two wagons loaded with bars of bullion from the mine at San Gabriel, came slowly across the plain along the dusty trail to the station. The teamsters leisurely unharnessed their mules, drove them down to the stream for water, hobbled them, and then, in the same leisurely fashion, set about preparing their own supper and making themselves comfortable for the night. The head of the outfit was an American, who walked into the station and smoked a friendly pipe with the new station-master while this work was going on.

"Glad to see somebody here who looks like a white man," he said. "What's gone with Barwood? Fired out?"

"No, he's still at the pump. I've got the station, and general charge."

"Pity the company didn't bounce him clean. He's a bad lot."

"What's the matter with him?"

"Well, if you've got general charge, and are going to stay here, you'll find out all about him before long, so I needn't tell you. But keep your eye open, and look out 'specially for his Greaser friends. They all stand in with him, and he stands in with them. He's

got the Alcalde's sister for a sort of extra wife, I b'lieve, and things are pretty rotten generally. Don't you trust any of 'em; and keep your gun where you can get at it easy all the time. Just come from the States?"

"No—at least only from Texas."

"Oh, that all? I was in hopes you was fresh from the States and had some news. A man gets sort of homesick for news from the States down in these ungodly parts. I'm a Pennsylvanian myself, born in Lancaster. What part are you from?"

"I'm a Pennsylvanian, too—born in Wilkesbarré."

"The h—l you say! Why, d—n it, shake! That's too good for anything. Drink, won't you?" and the teamster energetically shook Hardy's hand, and then extracted the beer-bottle that protruded conspicuously from his coat pocket, and tendered it with a hearty good-will. "It's only *mescal*," he said, apologetically. "You can't buy anything fit to drink down here without paying more'n your life's worth for it. But for *mescal* this ain't bad." And, to do him justice, when his turn at the bottle came, he backed his opinion in an eminently practical way.

"So you're a Wilkesbarré man, eh? Barwood comes from there, too. Did you know him at home?"

"No; I only lived in Wilkesbarré while I was a boy. I lived down the river a way. I never laid eyes on Barwood until I saw him here to-day."

"Well, I reckon you haven't missed much. I don't mind telling you—now I find we come from the same good old State, you and me—that he's about the d——dst dirtiest dog that ever I've come across. He's rung in with the Greasers, and I guess counts hisself more

Greaser now than white man : if he don't he ought to, for that's what he is. Maybe you don't know that this is about the worst smugglin' hole there is on the whole frontier ? Well, it is. Barwood's gone into smugglin' deep. He and the Alcalde boss things between 'em, I reckon, and do a big business. They're in the horse and cattle line, too—runnin' off stock from one side of the river and sellin' it on the other, you know. And unless I'm a good deal further out than I'm apt to be, that party that raided the Las Animas ranch last month—when old Don Manuel Salazar and one of his sons was killed in cold blood, and all the stock stampeded, and everything about the place worth stealin' cleaned out—came right from here, and Barwood was along with it.

“Now you know about how things stand and what you've got to look out for. I judge you to be, from your looks, a man that can take pretty good care of himself ; and I just tell you that to keep up your end in this hell-hole of a Santa María you need to be that kind ! Don't you take no chances at all. Keep your gun ready, and keep your eyes all around you all the time. And the best thing you can do is to give up your job. There's not enough money in running this station to pay for the all-day and all-night oneasiness that you've taken a contrac' for—to say nothin' of findin' yourself some mornin' laid out stiff, with knife-holes all over you, and most of your head blown off. You're a white man, and you come from Pennsylvania, and you're a d——d sight too good to be killed off by Greasers. So just you take my advice, and quit.”

“Well, I don't calculate on being here long,” Hardy

answered. "I took the job for a month, though, and I guess I'll manage to stick it out. I've lived around in some hard places in my time, and I've managed so far, you see, to keep my hair. I'm much obliged to you, all the same, for what you've told me. Sometimes you can manage better when you know just how things stand. What's your mine up at San Gabriel amount to? How does your ore mill-run? And what sort of a streak have you got?"

And then they drifted off into mining talk, and the teamster expatiated with a pardonable pride upon the brilliant prospects—which seemed to be rather at odds with the present condition—of the San Gabriel mine.

At six o'clock Hardy locked up the station and walked over to Barwood's house to supper. Half laughing at himself while he did it, he made as much of a toilet as the circumstances of the case would permit. His resources were limited, but he felt rather pleased with the result. His trousers were outside of his boots, instead of being tucked into them; he wore a coat; a black silk handkerchief was knotted under the rolling collar of his flannel shirt; his hands and face were as clean as soap and water could make them, and his crisp, black hair was brushed to a degree of preternatural smoothness. And there came over him, as he thus groomed himself that he might be pleasing in Mary's eyes, something of the old-time feeling that had possessed him as he made himself ready, in his Sunday best, for those Sunday walks during that happy summer that seemed now so very, very long ago. How bright, how fresh she had looked, he thought; how free she had been from sorrow and from care. And then the sharp

contrast between her carelessly glad past life and the life that she now was living—here among smugglers, thieves, murderers, very likely, with even her right of ownership in her scoundrel of a husband openly defied—struck him with the force of a physical blow. For a moment the purpose came into his mind of bringing on the shooting-match with Barwood right away, and so in some sort righting this great wrong. He gave a long sigh as his reason reasserted itself, and compelled him to admit that he must wait.

The cool winds had begun to come down from the mountains, and Santa María was aroused from its hot lethargy. As Hardy walked through the town, the doors of the *adobe* houses stood open; men lounged, smoking in the doorways—hard cases they looked for the most part; women were bending over little fires, preparing the evening meal; children frisked about and encouraged the fights among the dogs; herds of goats came up slowly from the river, to be penned for the night in the *corrales*, wagging their heads sagely, as the custom of goats is. There was an air of calm, of pastoral simplicity about the town, that Hardy was keen-witted enough to recognize was in rather droll contrast with its real character.

He found Barwood seated in front of his house, on a chair tipped back against the wall, smoking one of his favorite *cigarritos*.

“Take a seat an’ set down,” he said, pointing to a soap-box standing on end on the other side of the doorway. “Supper’ll be ready in a minute or two, I guess. This is th’ time o’ day that Santa María’s fit t’ live in—at least; as fit t’ live in as such a hole can be at any



time. I see th' San Gabriel outfit's got down. When you send their stuff off on th' night train, make 'em load it theirselves; an' be devilish careful that th' receipt you give 'em an' th' way-bill agree. They're a careless lot, an' like as not they'll have a receipt made out for more bars than theyv'e sent down. It 'ud be just like 'em. There's Mary callin'. Let's go in."

Hardy noticed, as he entered the room, that it had a neater air than at dinner-time. The change in Mary's appearance was still more striking. She had put on a print gown, fresh and cool-looking; there was a bow of blue ribbon at her neck and another in her beautiful hair—arranged in the pretty way that he remembered so well; her eyes had lost their tired look, and shone brightly, and in her cheeks was a delicate color. She was almost her old self again. As Hardy caught sight of her he could not repress a start of surprise. If he had felt an hour before only that his love for her was not dead, he felt now that it was most vigorously alive. She came forward and shook hands with him. There was something very thrilling in the touch of her warm hand.

"I'm so glad you've come, Mr. Hardy," she said. "It seems quite like old times."

"I'm sorry you didn't let me know we was havin' a party," Barwood struck in before Hardy could answer, "I'd 'a' put on a dress suit an' had my hair curled. You both look so fine that I don't know whether I'd better set to table with you. Maybe I'd better go an' get somethin' t' eat where the folks ain't so all-fired dressed up. I guess I wouldn't have t' go a great way t' find a welcome, neither."

The tone in which this was said, and the under-meaning of the words—which Hardy did not understand for a moment—heightened the color on Mary's cheeks and drove the light from her eyes.

"I—I am sorry, Will," she said. "I didn't know you'd mind. You used to like me in this dress. Don't you remember?"

"Yes, I did, but it was a good while ago," Barwood answered, dryly. "But I'll eat my supper all th' same, even if I ain't dressed up in store-clothes. Set down, Mr. Hardy. Don't mind my way of makin' fun. We don't go in much for fixin' up down here, an' seein' you and Mary—'specially Mary—slingin' so much style sort of got away with me. Looks as if Mary'd got up a reg'lar party supper, too, which is a way of celebratin' this joyous occasion that I tie too, for sure. So let's sail in an' have a good time."

But the celebration of the joyous occasion was not a success. Mary had been doing her best all the afternoon to foster a foolish fancy that she was back in the Wyoming Valley, and that Hardy was coming to supper with her at 'Squire Rambo's, as he used to come in the old times. She had made a sponge cake—he had always liked sponge cake—and had stewed some *tunas*, with a flavoring of lemon-juice, to take the place of his favorite apple-sauce. And over her cooking, and the thought of who the cooking was for, she had grown so light-hearted that the darkness of the present for a little space was conquered by the light of the past. All this light went out as her husband spoke; his threat to go for his supper where he would find a welcome brought the darkness of the present down upon her again like a pall.

As Hardy, less quickly, comprehended the meaning of this threat and the prodigious insolence of it, his hands clinched and he set his teeth hard. For him also the past had come again with sight of Mary, fresh and beautiful, looking as she had looked when he gave her the love that now he knew never had been recalled. The sudden forcing home upon him by her husband's words of what her present state was; the outrageous insult that those words almost openly conveyed, very nearly mastered his power of self-control. He did control himself; but, the relief in violence that he so eagerly longed for being impossible, he fell into a sullen rage.

Having precipitated this condition of affairs, Barwood got over his grumpiness and was extraordinarily cheerful. But for Mary and Hardy the supper was a meal of wormwood, and over it seemed to hang visibly the shadow of death. Hardy was determined to force a crisis quickly; Mary only felt vaguely that a crisis soon must come. And in the same way the one knew and the other instinctively felt that when it did come death certainly would come with it. It was not in human nature that conditions such as those in which they were living could work out to anything but a tragedy.

At last the supper was ended. Barwood cheerfully asked Hardy to stay and smoke a pipe; but he answered that he was tired, and would go over to the station and turn in at once, so as to get some solid sleep before the night train came up the line.

As they rose from the table Mary said quickly, the sound of her voice being lost in the scraping of the chairs upon the clay floor: "I must speak to you."

He nodded to show that he understood, and then he went away.

Hardy was in far too excited a state of mind and body to carry out his avowed intention of turning in and sleeping until the night train should arrive. He opened both doors at the station, and the window of the little inner room, so that the cool night wind might range freely through the building and carry off the heat accumulated in the pine boards. While this process was going on he brought the chair outside on the platform and seated himself there.

It was not surprising that he could not sleep. In the past few hours he had lived over again in his thoughts the portion of his life that had stirred him most deeply; he had found himself being drawn into an entanglement out of which he saw no clear way save that of killing the man who was the main cause of it; and he had been startled by the quickening in his heart of a love that he had thought was dead forever.

The revival of his love for Mary was a genuine surprise to Hardy; but he was not disposed to resent it, nor to crush it down. On the contrary, he gave it every encouragement. He had a better right to her, he argued, than that possessed by her brute of a husband. If, as seemed extremely probable, he should end by shooting Barwood, then everything would go smoothly—and he would be able to comfort himself with the reflection that he had saved a sheriff or a vigilance committee the trouble of a hanging-match. If Barwood should succeed in getting away without being shot, then—he thought of Mary's delicate, fair skin and red little mouth—well, then he would have her just the same

And he would deserve to have her, for he would be true to her and tender, and would do his best to make her forget the bitter sorrow that she had endured. He felt that from the standpoint of public sentiment on the frontier he had abstract right and justice on his side—and he meant to go in and win.

They would go back to the States, of course ; not to Pennsylvania, but to some live place in the West, where he could earn a good living right away, and in eight or ten years could make a comfortable fortune. He had not cared until now to make money, but in the course of his wandering, aimless life he had found out where and how in the West money could be made quickly by an energetic man. Now he would sail in and make it. When he got his pile they would go to Europe. Mary always had wanted to go to Europe—and if any of the queens they met were better dressed than she was he'd know the reason why ! In a contemptuous way he recalled his old-time plan for keeping her shut up all her life in the Wyoming Valley.

And then his thoughts drifted off into the time when this plan was formed, and one picture after another of Mary as he remembered her in those days formed itself in his mind. How he did love her then he thought—but how much more he loved her now !

As he sat there in the cool darkness, thinking these pleasant thoughts, the time slipped away rapidly. Toward ten o'clock a soft, silvery haze began to loom up in the east ; and a little later the full moon rose above the mountains, and flooded with a brilliant light the great, desolate plain. The shadow of the building fell over him—a shadow so sharp and strong that at a

distance of fifty feet his darkly clad form would have been invisible ; and to his eyes, looking out from this covert, the effect was that of an atmosphere of liquid radiance. He was not ordinarily an imaginative man, but in his present excited and exalted frame of mind this outburst of splendor seemed to him emblematic of the way in which from his own life a melancholy darkness had been banished by the great light of love. He accepted the good omen gladly, and his thoughts became still more sanguine and more bold.

A sound of footsteps and low voices startled him from his reverie. Two men were walking up the track toward the station, coming from the direction of the tank. Their wide-brimmed hats cast deep shadows over their faces, but the voice of one of the men he recognized as that of Barwood. They were speaking in Spanish, and, before he could distinguish their words, he inferred from the tone of their voices that they were engaged in some sort of argument. As they drew near to the station he saw Barwood place his hand restrainingly on his companion's arm. The man turned impatiently.

"It is better to kill him now," he said, "and so be rid of him. A dead dog can not bark."

"Patience, Señor Alcalde. If we kill him this first night we shall cause much talk, and until our great project is accomplished we do not want to be talked about. And I tell you again that if we can persuade him to join us he will be most useful. There is no need for haste. Let us wait a little and see what will come. He is in our hands ; should he not do what we require of him—" Barwood drew his hand quickly across his throat, and added : "It will not take long."

Hardy sat rigid in the shadow, his finger on the trigger of his self-acting revolver. One single step forward on the part of the two men would have been certain death to both of them. They were not sixty feet distant; their forms stood out sharply in the brilliant moonlight; a prettier shot could not reasonably have been desired. For a moment the Mexican stood irresolute. Then, yielding to Barwood's practical reasoning, he turned slowly, and the two walked away toward the town. As he turned a shiver went over him; perhaps, in some curious way, his body knew how near it had been to returning to the dust out of which it came.

Hardy's tense muscles relaxed slowly, and the hand that held the pistol hung down straight by his side. His first strong feeling was that of disappointment. Had the men advanced, he would have been amply justified in shooting them, and there was no doubt but that he would have made a clean job of it. So good a chance was not likely to come again. His luck had gone back on him, he thought. However, this much good had come out of the encounter: he knew now certainly what to look for from the other side. He had not, it is true, seriously doubted Barwood's amiable intentions toward him, but it was comforting to have heard them so clearly stated from his own lips. Now they were on even terms, so far as intentions went; and he had a little the best of the situation, in that he knew something of Barwood's plans.

The dry, cool night wind played over him soothingly. After so much excitement came the languor of reaction. Presently he dropped off into an easy, refreshing sleep, that lasted until he was roused by the whistle

of the coming train. When he had attended to the shipping of the bullion, and the train had gone on again, he brought his cot out on the platform and slept there comfortably until morning. He had expected to spend the night in the station, with the doors locked and the windows barred; but, from what he had heard, he knew that for the present he was not in danger, and so could indulge safely in the luxury of fresh air. He awoke thoroughly refreshed, and as he came up to breakfast from a bath in the river he enjoyed the pleasant sensation of feeling fully able to hold his own against anybody.

Barwood, already seated at the breakfast-table, obviously was the worse for loss of sleep. His eyes were red and heavy, and the *mescal* that he had taken to brace him up had done little more than dispose him to snap and snarl on small provocation. He had been venting his ill-humor on Mary apparently, for she had a nervous, frightened look, and seemed to have been crying. His salutation to Hardy was an inarticulate grunt. Mary tried to say good-morning cheerfully, but there was a quiver in her voice that went to Hardy's heart. His eyes must have shown her how much he felt for her, for hers filled with tears; and then a delicate color came into her pale face. She poured out his coffee from the tin pot standing on the stove; and as she stood beside him for a moment while she placed the cup on the table, her hand, very lightly, pressed against his arm. There was something appealing in this touch: it was an avowal of her need for protection and of her trust in his shielding strength.

Hardy ate his breakfast in silence. He could not



trust his voice in talking commonplace talk with Mary ; and he could not trust his temper in talking with her husband at all. Fortunately, Barwood kept silence too. Even in his present mood of sullenness he still seemed to desire to maintain peace. He waited at the table until Hardy had finished his breakfast, and then said, sulkily : " Well, we'd better be movin', I s'pose."

Hardy accepted the situation and left the house at once. But a quick glance as he went out assured Mary that in some way he would compass the meeting that they both desired.

At the station there was no work to occupy him. The down passenger train was not due for two hours ; the down freight not for an hour or two later, and the up freight was not due until afternoon. Hardy naturally was an energetic man, and this dull, enforced idleness oppressed him. He brought the chair out on the platform, in the shade of the building—for the heat already was potent—and sought consolation in his pipe. In the course of half an hour he saw smoke rising from the valley, beyond the tank, and a few minutes later heard the regular strokes of the pump. He paid no attention to the sound at first—save that he found its rhythmic monotony soothing—but after a while the thought occurred to him that as only five engines had watered at the tank since the previous morning, when it certainly had been full, there was no need for wasting wood by starting the pump so soon again ; and then he became thoroughly aroused, for this waste of wood was the kernel of the matter which the superintendent had sent him to Santa María to investigate.

He got on his feet briskly, plumped the chair inside

the station, shut and locked the doors, and walked quickly up the track to the tank. The gauge showed fourteen feet of water—just about what he had expected to find. Obviously, there was no need of pumping for at least two days. On the other hand, Barwood's confessed disposition to let *mescal* get the better of him now and then gave a valid reason—though not exactly a reason that the Company would recognize—for not permitting his water to get low. In keeping his tank full he was only making a prudent allowance for the factor of error; that is to say, providing three days of leeway in which he might get drunk with impunity. While Hardy was thinking the matter over, irresolute as to whether he should or should not go down and order the pumping stopped, he perceived that there was no sound of water running into the tank; and then, looking closely, he saw that the gauge was not moving. As the pumping still went on, it was evident that there must be a break in the pipe. This, of course, was a matter to be attended to at once.

From the tank the pipe was carried on tall posts to a rocky hillock, and thence, raised a little above the ground, through a tangle of mesquite shrub down the steep bank to the pump. Half-way down the bank emerging from the mesquite bushes, was the *acéquia* that fed the plantation below the town. Through this *acéquia* the water was running merrily; he could see the glint of it in the sun.

Hardy followed the line of pipe into the bushes with some difficulty, for the way which had been cleared when the pipe was laid was now so obstructed by mesquite branches and long spines of cactus and other

thorny growths as to make walking both difficult and painful. He wondered a good deal over this condition of affairs, for common sense dictated the necessity of keeping a clear way along the pipe—and these obstructions obviously had been put in place purposely. But his wonder ceased when he succeeded, at the sacrifice of the integrity of both his clothes and his skin, in forcing his way to the point where the line of the *acéquia* was crossed—and here also the mystery of the pumping was effectually dispelled. The pipe was not broken, but carefully unscrewed at one of its joints, and from the opening thus made the water was discharging at the full power of the pump into the *acéquia*. A monkey-wrench screwed fast to the sleeve of the joint made the repair of the break possible in a moment. A well-beaten path went along the bank of the *acéquia* for a hundred yards, and then dipped downward through the bushes in the direction of the engine-house,

As Hardy made these interesting discoveries, he whistled to himself softly. The case was perfectly clear. Barwood was using the Company's pump and the Company's firewood to supply his Mexican friends with water for irrigation; and he was doing it so cleverly that the chances of his being discovered were only about one in a thousand. However, the odd one tenth of one per cent had gone against him at last, and his little game was spoiled. Hardy had lived long enough in hot, dry lands to appreciate fully the benefit that Barwood was conferring on the community—at the Company's expense—and how strong in consequence must be his hold on the popular good-will. And he further perceived that about the surest and quickest way to get a knife or

a bullet in himself would be to report his discovery to the superintendent, and so to cause the shutting down of these highly irregular water-works. That he must make such a report was inevitable, but, as he reflected, it need not necessarily be made at once. The Company's interests would not suffer seriously by reason of his withholding his action for a few days, and in the mean time his knowledge gave him a power over Barwood that in various ways he might use to excellent advantage.

As he stood beside the broken pipe, revolving these thoughts in his mind, a sudden, curious, creeping thrill went through him, chilling him in the midst of the hot sunshine, and causing his heart for a moment to stand still. Almost in panic he turned hastily away. It was over in a moment, and he laughed at himself as he forced his way back along the line of the pipe through the thorns.

Hardy was in a state of high satisfaction. He had accomplished already the purpose for which he had been sent to Santa María, and he felt that he now had a powerful lever with which to work in accomplishing the still stronger purpose that had formed in his heart since his arrival there. He returned to the station, and when he had washed the blood from his scratched hands he settled himself to smoking in a very comfortable frame of mind. Both for the Company and for himself he had done an excellent morning's work.

At dinner Barwood was in a less cantankerous mood. Either he had worked off the effects of his early morning *mescal*, or else, which was more probable, he had distilled within himself more of the milk of human kindness from additional libations. He even was jocose

in a heavy way, chaffing Hardy clumsily about his failure in love-making; and bringing a flame of scarlet to Mary's face by telling her that now she knew that sweethearts were like chickens and curses, and came home to roost. Hardy found these pleasantries so galling that, as the only way of avoiding a collision, he declared that it was too hot to eat, and so left the table and the house. His host looked at him suspiciously as he made this abrupt move—and he had better ground for suspicion than he imagined; for, while Barwood was washing his face and hands outside the door before dinner, Hardy had secured Mary's promise to meet him an hour later in the valley of the stream, beneath the bluff.

Hardy had thought the matter over carefully, and had decided that this hot time in the early afternoon was the period in the whole range of the twenty-four hours when they would be most secure. Every human being at that time almost certainly would be asleep—a general somnolence that by no means could be counted upon at night in so irregular a community—and even should some accidentally-awake person see Mary, water-jar in hand, going down or ascending the path that led to the river, suspicion would not be aroused. At the most, her action would attract no more attention than would be embodied in a terse comment upon the American-like folly displayed in going for water during the hours which all right-thinking Mexicans hold sacred to the deep slumber that is begot of heat.

While Hardy waited at the station impatiently for the hour to pass, he was surprised by hearing again the sound of the pump. He had counted upon Barwood's acquired Mexican habits to place him among the sleep-

ers, and for a moment he found this evidence that Barwood was awake decidedly disconcerting. After all, though, he reflected, whether Barwood was asleep or at work in the engine-house, the practical result was the same; and, on the whole, small though the chance would be of his waking up from his *siesta*, the chance of his leaving his engine was even smaller. And having arrived at this conviction he dismissed the matter from his mind, and gave his thoughts free rein concerning the strange meeting that he was about to have with the woman who once had filled his whole life, and whom he now had found again in so desperate a case that his reawakened love had added to it the tenderness of a great pity and the fierceness of a concentrated rage.

## VI.

HARDY'S nature never had been a gentle one, and there certainly had been nothing softening in the experiences which had come to him during his three years of life on the frontier; being now stirred to its very depths, a burning passion had been aroused in him in which every turbulent element in his being was involved. As he strode backward and forward through the length of the two small rooms, he closed and opened his hands, his breath came hot and short, his eyes shone dangerously, on his face was a dark flush. He remembered the touch of Mary's hand on his shoulder that morning. Had Barwood happened to come into the station just then, he certainly would have shot him on sight.

At last the hour of waiting was ended. Hardy

shivered a little as he returned his watch to his pocket—during the final minutes he had held it in his hand—and went out into the quivering heat. In all the time that he had known her, in the old days, he had not even kissed her, he thought as he walked along.

A little below the point at which the railroad crossed it, the river bent sharply, and beyond this turn was the bluff on which stood the town. Hardy walked toward the railroad bridge, but on the side of the embankment farthest from the engine-house and tank. In case any wakeful person chanced to see him, the natural inference would be that he was on his way to join Barwood at the pump—the steady beating of which sounded regularly through the hot air. A footpath, the shortest way between Barwood's house and the pump, ran along the valley, parallel with the stream, through thickets of nopales and mesquite, and, following this, Hardy came in a few minutes to the spot where he had bidden Mary meet him. She was waiting for him in the path. As he caught sight of her—a look of eagerness on her face as she heard the sound of his footsteps, the sunlight sparkling in her hair, her round white arm showing, as she shaded her eyes from the sun—his heart gave a bound. He did not trust himself to speak. For a moment a dizziness came over him, and he put his hand to his forehead as though in pain.

Nourished by the near-by water, the mesquite bushes hereabouts were grown to be little trees, which formed a grove, screening the face of the bluff. A faintly marked path, worn by the goats, led crookedly through this grove to a narrow open space, above which rose the bluff, trending outward. He drew her along this

path, and seated her on a fallen stone in the shadowy nook formed by the rocky overhang. Here they were hidden completely ; but above the bushes they could see down the valley, and out across the great sun-beaten plain, that far away rose in long slopes to the flanks of the gray-blue mountains which girded it in. A slow current of air—dry, hot, stimulating—set up the valley. The only sound that broke the almost palpable stillness was the low throbbing of the pump. To them both, this sound brought back vividly the memory of that Sunday afternoon in the Wyoming Valley, three years before.

Hardy seated himself beside her and drew her toward him.

“O John—you musn’t,” she said, speaking in a low, frightened voice. But she made no effort to loose herself from his grasp.

He did not answer, but he settled her head against his shoulder and drew her still more closely to him. The flush on his face had deepened.

Suddenly she gave a short, quick sob, and her head drooped forward until it rested on his breast. Then she began to cry ; softly, as a hurt child cries while being comforted.

“It all has been so very dreadful,” she moaned. “Your—your curse came true, John.”

He did not answer for a moment, but his arm clasped her less closely and more tenderly, while the flush on his face slowly faded, and left him very pale. “My poor little girl,” he said. “Tell me all that has happened. I can help you, you know—and I mean to do it.”



And then slowly, bit by bit, she told him the same story that Barwood had told him—but from the point of view not of the wrong-doer, but of the wronged. It did not seem to her that she had in anywise contributed to her own sorrow; and, without the mitigating facts of her own moodiness and coldness, the case that she made out against Barwood was a black one indeed.

“And it is worse here in Santa María than it has been at all, John,” she went on. “Will was wild and cruel, and got drunk in those other places; but here he is mixed up with these dreadful Mexicans in all sorts of wicked things which make me shiver to think about. There is smuggling going on all the time, and they all are robbers, and I know that he was with them when that ranch was raided and those poor men were killed.” Mary shuddered violently. “Oh, it is horrible, horrible!”

“And this Mexican woman?”

Mary’s face grew crimson, and then pale. She tried to draw away from him, trembling. Then, in a voice scarcely above a whisper, she said: “That—that is the very worst of all.”

For a little time they both were silent. The flush had come back to Hardy’s face and his hold upon her had tightened. She could feel the strong beating of his heart. His voice was unsteady, and had a strange sound in it when he spoke.

“Mary, will you let me take you out of all this?”

“What do you mean?” she asked, in a troubled, frightened tone.

“I mean, will you come away with me from this brute and let me take care of you? Don’t push me

away. Don't answer yet"—he held her closely, and spoke rapidly in order to check her rising words. "You know how I loved you in the old times, Mary. You were everything in life to me. And now I love you more, greatly more, than even I did then. This man has no right to you; he has thrown away his right to you—he has thrown it away, I tell you! Think of what his life has been—of what it is now—of the insult he has put upon you here in your own home. He has no right to you, Mary. And I have a right to you because I love you so. I will take such good care of you, Mary; I will spend all my life in making you happy once more—in trying to make you forget how unhappy you have been. Don't—don't go away from me, Mary—what have I done to make you angry? Don't you understand that I love you—that I *must* have you? Don't you—"

She broke away from him and sprang to her feet. She was far from being a majestic woman under ordinary circumstances, but there certainly was an air of majesty about her now. Hardy stood up, facing her.

"How dare you?" she panted. "Because my husband is—because my husband has hurt me so, is that any reason why you should hurt me still more? You are as bad as he is. You are worse than he is. Isn't there such a thing as one single honorable man in the world?" Then the heroic tones died out of her voice, and her commanding pose changed to a look of fear and weakness. "O John, John!" she said, "I thought that I could trust you. I thought that you really would help me. I never—oh, my God! I never thought of

anything like this." She sank down on the stone again, and buried her face in her hands and began to cry.

Hardy felt, and looked a little, like a dog that had received a deserved beating. Mary's piteous appeal, even more than her indignant protest, had made him realize how bitterly cruel he had been; how, if he had deliberately set himself to make the horror of her life greater he could not have done it more effectually. Of course she would not trust him any more; he could not blame her; and so his purpose—an honest and manly purpose now—to help her could do no good. For a long while he stood in silence, looking away from her out over the plain, chewing the cud of most bitter thoughts.

At last Mary spoke: "John, tell me that you didn't mean it. I'm sure you didn't. I'm so very, very unhappy, John. And unless you help me I don't see any hope at all. Tell me that you didn't mean it, John."

There was an infinite pathos in her words; a despairing pathos—for that she still should appeal to him for help showed how desperate her plight must be. But for him there was comfort in this appeal, since it made clear the way for his atonement. "I can tell you from the very core of my heart that I don't mean it now, Mary," he said. "Please God, I really will be an honest friend to you now, and I will get you out of this honestly, and home safely to the States. I guess I must have been crazy, Mary; but I'm not crazy any longer, and you can trust me right straight through."

Mary looked up at him gladly. "Those are the best words I've heard in three years," she said. "O John, you nearly killed me a little while ago; but you

must have been crazy, just as you said ; and now you are giving me hope that is worth living for. Somehow, all alone as I've been, I haven't had the strength to try to break away and get home. I've been afraid. I guess I haven't much of what they call backbone. But I have your strength now, John ; and things will all come right, I'm sure. You'll get me home safe, won't you, John ? ”

She came close to him eagerly, and took his hand. As a father might have done, he put his arm around her and drew her head upon his breast.

“ But you must be very careful, John,” she went on. “ Will is such a masterful sort of a man ! If he finds out anything, I know that he'll kill us.”

Hardy smiled confidently. “ I guess if there's any killing going around I won't get left,” he said. “ I don't want to kill your husband, of course, but if it's got to be done I'll do it all the same.”

“ But maybe not while he's got the drop on you ! ”

Hardy turned quickly. Barwood was standing in the path not ten feet away, holding aside the mesquite branches with his left hand, while in his right hand, leveled at Hardy's head, was a cocked revolver.

“ It may be your ante ; but I've got the cards,” he said, coolly.

Had Hardy been a tenderfoot, he would have made an effort to draw his pistol—and would have been shot instantly. Having had the benefit of three years' experience of Southwestern manners and customs, he stood perfectly still and awaited developments.

Mary had screamed when she heard her husband's

voice, and saw him standing before her grimly threatening; and then she had sunk cowering down, with her face bent close to her knees, and her hands pressed tightly to her ears to deaden the sound of the pistol-shot. To her surprise, this sound did not come. Slowly she raised her head.

"Now, Mr. Hardy," Barwood said, "if you'll give me your word of honor that you'll be on th' square as I promise you I'll be with you, we won't have any shoot-in' just at present. Is it a go?"

"Yes," Hardy answered.

"No monkey tricks, on your word of honor?" Barwood said, letting his revolver fall slowly.

"On my word of honor."

"All right, then. Maybe one of us'll have t' be used as th' beginnin' of an American graveyard in these parts before we get through with each other, but th' percession needn't start just yet.—Here, you fool Mary, go back t' th' house."

Hardy quivered as this order was given, but Mary—used to orders thus tersely worded—rose quietly to obey it. She stood for a moment looking at the two men as they confronted each other.

"Oh, what have I done, what have I done," she moaned, "that I should be the cause of such dreadful things?"

"What have you done?" Barwood answered. "Well, I'll tell you what you've done. From first t' last in all you've had t' say or do with me an' Hardy here, you've made an everlastin' infernal fool of yourself an' of us too. Fust of all, you said you'd marry me; an' I went off in good faith t' make a comfortable home for you.

An' then what did you do? Why, you coaxed Hardy along into fallin' in love with you! An' then, instead of shakin' me an' marryin' him—which would 'a' been tough on me, but at least would 'a' had sense in it—for th' fool that you are you shook *him* an' married *me*! An' then, when you'd made my life so d——n mean t' me that I took t' knockin' around with th' boys, just t' try t' forget how mis'erable I was, up you goes on your ear an' says that I'm a drunken brute, an' that you was a martyr. An' now, after you've been rowin' me off an' on for six months an' more because I've got a Mexican lady friend who's not all moods an' stuck-up-ness, an' who's got a heart in her body, I can't go to my work an' come back agen without findin' you an' another man in th' thick of a huggin'-match! There's no consistency anywheres about you. There's nothin' about you, good or bad, for a man t' take hold of an' tie to. You're just a fool—a ferlorn, useless fool!”

Barwood delivered this extended opinion in a tone of sincere conviction and utter contempt. He was so deeply moved that he even forgot to interpolate into his discourse his customary larding of heavy, mouth-filling oaths. Hardy listened with a white face; and he was the more stirred to resentment, perhaps, by an uneasy consciousness that Barwood was cutting terribly close to the truth. Mary scarcely grasped the sense of a single word. She was too stunned and shaken to understand anything just then. She waited with the stolid bearing beneath abuse that had become habitual with her until her husband had finished; and then, walking in a dazed, uncertain way that made Hardy long to go to her support, she went slowly along the path.

As the mesquite bushes closed behind her, Barwood said, briskly: "Now, Hardy, you an' me'll talk this matter right out now, an' get that graveyard business settled onet for all."

## VII.

BARWOOD seated himself on the stone from which Mary had just risen, and, as he began to speak, he slowly rolled a *cigarrito* in his brown fingers. Hardy leaned against the bluff, and, half turning away as he listened, looked out over the fringe of mesquite bushes and the great cactus-covered sunny plain to the far mountains.

"I s'pose you'll allow," Barwood began, "that when I caught you huggin' my wife that way, I'd a perfee' right t' shoot you without any talk about it?"

Hardy half turned and nodded. It was better, he decided, to let Barwood think what he pleased than to complicate matters by an explanation that he neither would understand nor believe.

"Very good, that's somethin' we can begin with agreein' to. Well, it's just th' truth that I would 'a' shot you if I'd thought Mary was worth it. But I don't. You've just heard me say what I think about her, an' I needn't say 't all over again. Th' short of it is that she's done me nothin' but bad turns ever sence I married her, and I'm sick of havin' her around. She's not worth shootin' anybody for, an' that's just th' everlastin' truth. Now you strike me as bein' a pretty stiff sort of a man, th' kind that's got sand an' is good t' tie to. I reckon me an' you could make a team, if

only onct we could fix things so's we'd pull together. That's what I'm after now. You've got eyes in your head, an' I guess—t' say nothin' of what I s'pose Mary's told you—you've sized things up here at Santa María pretty true. You got down pretty d——n quick, I noticed, t' my little game about th' pump."

Hardy started.

"Yes, I seed you this mornin'. You was sharp, but you had a close call, all the same. I was watchin' you, an' I had my gun all ready, an' I'd more'n half a mind t' let it go off, too—but I didnt't. Well, you ketched on t' that little matter 'n short order, an' th' way you tumbled to't showed you t' be one of th' wide-awake kind. That's th' kind I like—an' it's th' kind that has a chance t' make somethin' out of livin' here. I guess you credit me with too much hard sense t' think I'd stay in Santa María long just for th' fun of runnin' that d——n pump? Not much! An' I'm not here for my health, neither. Now, I'm goin' t' talk right out t' you, man t' man—for th' way things stand between me an' you we've got t' have a fight or a settlement. An' I just tell you now that if 't comes to a fight, an' you lay me out, you won't make nothin' by it. My Greaser friends know what I'm doin' and are lookin' out after me. If I'm hurt you'll never get out of here alive. There's not so much sleepiness about this town as there seems t' be. We gave you this chance t' talk t' Mary—I knowed you both wanted it, an' 'u'd take it fast enough—'cause I allowed it 'u'd sort of bring things right down t' th' hard pan, quick an' comfortable. An' so 't has, you see. But there ain't a man in Santa María who ain't been listenin' all day, an' who ain't listenin' right



now, for th' sound of a gun goin' off. They'll know quick enough what it means if they hear it; an' I tell you again, that if you should happen t' hurt me you'd be as dead inside of ten minutes as George Washington."

Hardy was not a nervous man, but a shudder went over him as he thought of the eyes which had watched him all that day from the closed, silent houses; of the alert peril that had beset him in the midst of what had seemed to him such slumberous security. And this shudder went down into the inner fiber of his heart as he remembered the curious creeping thrill that had gone through him as he stood—covered, as he now knew, by Barwood's revolver—beside the broken pipe. By the open danger that now menaced him he was not seriously disturbed. He knew about it, and to a certain extent could guard against it. But there was something eerie, devilish, in the thought of this deadly malevolence which had lurked beside him undiscovered in the very fullness and brilliance of day.

Barwood chuckled. "I reckon you allowed you had a full hand, an' didn't happen t' think we might have some extry aces under th' table," he said. "Well, we had. An' we've got 'em there yet.

"An' now you've truly sized up th' game, I can talk business. It's genuine business, too. You see, I'm at th' head of what I call an importin' outfit. It's not exac'ly reg'lar in th' way it works; but it's good for th' country, an' it's pretty middlin' good for ourselves. An' it's a sort of a moral institootion, too, 'cause it takes away th' temptation of stealin' from th' Greaser custom-house officers. *Savez ?*"

“You mean you’re smuggling?”

“Why, yes,” Barwood answered, with a fine frankness, “it *is* called smugglin’ sometimes—but I think callin’ it importin’ sounds better. We’re in th’ cattle business, too; an’ that’s a very payin’ branch of th’ concern. An’ in a gen’ral sort of way we’re on th’ make all ’round. I don’t want to brag about myself, but it’s only fair t’ say that for a business that hasn’t been runnin’ long we’re doin’ mos’ uncommon well. I can’t prove ’t t’ you from th’ books, ’cause we don’t keep none; but I can prove ’t t’ you from th’ dollars—*them* we’ve got stacked up in th’ old church. I guess holdin’ all them dollars is about th’ best use that church ever was put to. It’s th’ first time I’ve ever knowed a church t’ be of real practical account t’ anybody. Would you like t’ take a look at ’em?”

Hardy turned around and looked at Barwood squarely. “What are you driving at, anyway?” he asked.

“Drivin’ at! Can’t you see? I want you t’ come into th’ concern an’ be a pardner.”

“Be a h—l!” Hardy burst out.

“Drive slow. Don’t git mad about it,” Barwood went on, coolly. “Gettin’ mad’s no way t’ manage a business transaction. Now, I’m talkin’ horse-sense. You’re th’ sort of man I’ve been lookin’ for, an’ if you’ll chip in you won’t be sorry for’t. ’Tain’t many folks I’d make th’ offer to. But unless I’m a good way up th’ wrong tree, you’ve got th’ nerve t’ rustle things, and ain’t th’ kind in a tight place t’ go back on your friends. Some of these Greasers are pretty good, but I never squarely can tell when they won’t slip up on me; an’ I want somebody around who has sand an’ can be

depended on. You're that kind, an' that's th' reason I want you.

"Now, that's my side. Your side is that I let you into a first-rate thing, where there's money t' be made quick, an' lots of it. It's a rattlin' good chance for you. What do you say? Will you ante?"

"I'll see you an' the business d——d first!" Hardy answered, promptly.

"Don't be so sure about that. I haven't given you all th' points yet. There's some more reasons why you'd better come in, an' th' biggest one is, now that I've talked in this free an' friendly way with you, I can't afford t' have you stay out. I didn't intend t' talk this way unless I really had to; but I guess you're sharp enough t' see that, after what I've told you, either you've got t' come in, or I've got t' use you as a sort of starter for that American graveyard we was talkin' about awhile ago. You know a little too much about our game for 't t' be quite healthy for you unless you take a hand yourself. Do you ketch on?"

"I guess I'd about as lief be shot now as have it done later by a file of Mexican soldiers; to say nothing of it's being a good deal better than being hung by a sheriff if I happened to get caught on the other side of the line."

"There's something in that," Barwood answered, in a tone of serious thoughtfulness. "Them little chances sometimes come in our business, an' we've got t' take 'em. But what you ought t' look at is that they're nothin' but chances—an' this other shootin' that I'm talkin' about is th' deadeast sort of a dead sure thing."

"Well, then, bring it along—you've got my answer."

Hardy spoke with entire unconcern, and with obvious sincerity.

"I knowed you had sand!" Barwood said, in a tone of admiring approval. "You're the man I want. It'll go agin my grain powerful t' put you in that graveyard—an' that's th' everlastin' truth. If it's got t' be done, I'll do it, of course; but I truly don't want to. Now, look here, Hardy, there's money for you in this deal, if you'll come in; an' you know what'll happen t' you if you stay out—now what do you say if I'll chuck in Mary to boot?"

Hardy faced around on Barwood sharply. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"Just plump an' clear what I say. If you'd had as much of her as I've had, or if you'd th' sense t' reason out from what I've told you about th' way she's used me, how more'n wuthless she is, you wouldn't want her. But when it was a matter of women I never knowed a man yet as wasn't a fool, an' I s'pose you're like all th' rest. It's plain you do want her powerful. Well, if you'll make this deal with me you can have her. Tell me, is it a go, now?"

Hardy turned very pale and leaned against the rock heavily. He was genuinely horrified. He put his hand to his throat. Once or twice he made an effort to speak, but the words would not come. Although supported by the rock, his body swayed a little. At last, in a voice pitched very low, as though to give him more control over it, he said, slowly:

"You mean that you will get divorced, and that I—that I may marry her?"

"Well, I can't say that I'd thought of quite such

fancy fixin's as all that," Barwood answered. "But it's a matter of no partic'lar diff'rence t' me how you go about it. I guess Mary'd like it that way; she always did go in for style." And then he added, sharply, and with a tone of suspicion in his voice: "But we can't have no foolin' 'round after such Fifth Avenue trimmin's as divorces now. T' get a divorce you'd have t' go t' th' States for't, an' just at present that ain't by a d——n sight what we're goin' t' do. Oh, come, Hardy, what's th' good of makin' an infernal fussy fool of yourself this way? Just tell me, will, or will not, my throwin' Mary in for boot make you trade?"

Hardy's loathing for Barwood was intense, but he could not afford to show it. If he refused this offer squarely, he knew that he would not live the day out, and with his death Mary's chance of escape would die too. What little will-power she ever had possessed her husband long ago had crushed out of her. Unless deliverance came to her from outside herself—and he alone could bring it to her—she surely was lost. By a great effort he steadied himself so that his voice should not betray his anger and disgust.

"Give me a little time to think," he said.

"Now, that begins t' sound as if you meant t' talk sense," Barwood answered. "Yes, you can think things over a bit; that's only fair. But you mustn't fool away much time on it. I'll give you till ten o'clock t'-night t' make up your mind in. How'll that do? If you settle t' come in, you'll understand then why I couldn't give you longer. An' if you don't come in—well, if you don't come in, I don't think that un-

derstandin' or not understandin' 'll make any partic'lar diff'rence to you."

As Barwood gave this answer, in a tone that emphasized the sinister significance of his words, the sound of a locomotive whistle was heard faintly.

"I may as well mention," Barwood added, "that I've got some of my Greasers in that busted old *adobe* house elost by th' station. I'm goin' up with you now t' meet th' train, an' if you try t' come 't over us by givin' us away t' th' freight outfit, it'll be my onpleasant duty t' start th' shootin' right off, an' scoop in th' train-hands along with it—which wouldn't be exac'ly a square deal for them, for it's none of their funeral, anyway.

"We'd better be movin' now. I don't think you're likely t' try any monkey tricks with me; but I guess I'll let you walk ahead, all th' same."

Hardy pulled himself together and walked in front of Barwood through the bushes, and thence along the narrow path to the break in the bluff, up which the path ascended to the village. Having reached the level land above, they walked together, side by side, to the station. The freight train was in sight, half a mile down the line.

"Just t' show you that I'm not bluffin' an' that I really have th' drop on you," Barwood said, pleasantly, as they passed the partly ruined house, "you may as well take a look at my friends here. They won't mind it—an' seein' 'em 'll make you understand that 't won't do you no good t' try t' rope in th' boys on th' train."

The roof of the *adobe* house had fallen in and part of the rear wall had crumbled down; but the front and

side walls remained, and the heavy door still was in place. Having whistled softly, Barwood pushed the door open, and, by a gesture invited Hardy to look inside. Within the house fifteen or twenty men were standing or sitting. All wore revolvers, and a dozen Winchester rifles stood in a row against the wall. The Alcalde, who seemed to be in command of these very irregular forces, stepped forward as Barwood opened the door.

"Will the gentleman join us?" he asked in Spanish.

"The gentleman seems well disposed," Barwood answered; "but as yet he does not speak positively. I have the pleasure of showing him these gentlemen, our friends, in order to convince him that to ask assistance from the Americans now coming on the train will not be wise. You, Señor Alcalde, will oblige me by accompanying us to the station; and you, gentlemen, will understand what to do should any trouble arise."

And then he added, in English: "But I guess there won't be any rumpus; eh, Hardy? You'd only get left if you tried it on, you see."

Hardy was forced to admit to himself, as with Barwood and the Alcalde he mounted the station platform just as the train came to a halt, that an appeal for help would be worse than useless. It would do him no good, and it almost certainly would result in the killing of every man in the freight crew.

There was nothing to throw off or take on at the station, and in a couple of minutes the train pulled out and ran slowly down the grade to the tank. For a moment, as it started, Hardy thought of breaking away from Barwood's side, jumping on the engine and throw-

ing the valve wide open—trusting to the sudden start at full speed to snap the coupling with the train—and so taking the chances of getting off. Barwood seemed to understand this thought, and checked it.

“You’d better not try any monkey tricks,” he said, quietly. “You’d only get hurt; t’ say nothin’ of gettin’ th’ boys on th’ train into trouble. My Greasers are a fightin’ lot, an’ won’t stand any foolishness just now—an’ I won’t, neither.”

So the train moved away, and Hardy watched it as it slid along the rails, much as a man floating on a spar in mid-ocean would watch a passing vessel that he could not hail without at once bringing death to himself and to all on board. As he realized the devilish ingenuity with which Barwood had laid his plans, and perceived how completely, so far, he had been a puppet in Barwood’s hands, a chill went down into his heart. But the chill was only momentary. Instantly a healthy reaction of hot anger set in, and with it came renewed confidence in himself. He was in a tight place—a very tight place, certainly; but he had been in tight places a good many times before, and always had managed to get himself out of them. It would not be his fault if he did not down Barwood and his gang of Greasers yet.

The engine took in water at the tank, and then, puffing vigorously, slowly ascended the long grade. They watched it in silence until the train had shrunk to a mere speck and the puffing of the engine no longer could be heard.

“I don’t want you to think, Hardy, that I don’t believe you’re not going to play fair,” Barwood said, as



they turned about and faced each other, "but it'll save you from bein' lonesome if my friend Don Pedro here an' one or two of th' boys sort of set around an' keep you company. I know you wouldn't do it on purpose, but if you was left by yourself you might kind of accidentally get t' foolin' with that telegraph-key, you know, in a way that wouldn't be just altogether wholesome; so it's safer for all hands that you sha'n't have th' chance. Don Pedro is a very pleasant gentleman, an' you'll find him ready t' tell you all about th' business—goin' into th' fine points of't as I hadn't time to. I'd like t' stay an' keep you company myself, but I've got a good deal t' do just now, an' can't. We've got quite a piece of work on hand for t'-night, that I'll tell you all about a little later—when you've made up your mind, as I know you're goin' to, t' come into the concern. Just you think about what I've been tellin' you, an' about what Don Pedro will tell you, too, about what a good business 'tis, an' don't you throw away th' best chance for makin' a big strike you've ever had offered t' you. An' though I really don't like t' speak about it, don't forget what I was sayin' about that American graveyard; an' don't you forget"—here Barwood came close to Hardy and lowered his voice—"what I said about Mary: if you'll come in, she's yours."

Hardy made no reply. Barwood accepted his silence in good part, nodded pleasantly, and walked off toward the town. The Alcalde went with him, and at the ruined house they stopped for a few minutes in consultation. Then the Alcalde and two men returned and walked away down the line of the railroad, two more men came over and joined Don Pedro at the station,

and the rest straggled off toward the town in Barwood's wake.

Hardy walked into the station and seated himself beside the table on which was the telegraph instrument. Don Pedro followed after him closely, and the two men placed themselves just outside the door.

"It will be more commodious for the Señor if he will seat himself where he will have the pleasure of the fresh air," said Don Pedro, politely.

"Thanks, Señor, I am very well here," Hardy answered.

"But—the Señor will pardon me?—but the Señor's hand might inadvertently touch the little machine. It is better for him here."

"Oh!" said Hardy, "I comprehend," and he moved his chair.

"And since the Señor, who is among friends, can have no use for it, I am sure that he will give me his pistol to take care of for him?"

Hardy was disposed to argue this request; but, as he hesitated, the men in the doorway moved forward into the room and ranged up beside him. Under these circumstances argument was out of place. With a very bad grace he yielded. Don Pedro waved his hand politely, and declared in courteous tones that he owed the Señor a thousand thanks.

He was a red-faced, dirty, villainous-looking dog, this Don Pedro, but his voice was gentle and low, his language was conspicuously elegant, and his manners were above reproach. In the event of his finding it necessary to commit a murder, he was quite the sort of man to apologize to his victim in well-chosen words,

and with a certain amount of sincerity. Being naturally a loquacious personage, he made several attempts to draw Hardy into conversation, but without success.

"The Señor, no doubt, has much upon his mind," he said at last. "He wishes to meditate upon the good fortune that we offer him. He is quite right, and I shall disturb him no more. He will join me in smoking?" Hardy shook his head. "No? Ah, then, he will pardon me if I smoke alone."

Saying which, Don Pedro unrolled a *cigarrito*, brushed away a part of the tobacco, re-rolled it firmly, lighted it with a double-headed match, and then settled himself as comfortably as the circumstances of the case would permit on a seat improvised from a nail-keg, and apparently gave himself up wholly to the pure happiness of smoking.

That Don Pedro's abstraction was more apparent than real was shown by the fact that he had been careful to seat himself between Hardy and the telegraph instrument. And Hardy noticed also that when the men outside lit their *cigarritos*—as they presently did, of course—the little ceremony of unwrapping, rewrapping, and lighting was performed in turn, so that one of them watched him constantly, alert and with free hands. They all seemed to think that a single touch upon the key of the telegraph would suffice to give the alarm; and they all evidently had a wholesome respect for Hardy's strength and courage, and were determined to guard against the possibility of his taking them by surprise. As he perceived how sharply they watched him, the saying current on the border that one Ameri-

can can whip three Mexicans came into his mind ; and he smiled grimly as he thought that these three Mexicans certainly were conducting themselves as though they believed that the saying was true. But for the certainty that the sound of shooting would bring all the men in the town about his ears, he would have given them a chance—unarmed though he was—to settle the matter by a practical experiment ; and he rather flattered himself that the saying would be confirmed by the result. Probably he was over-confident, for the Mexicans were so keenly alive to his smallest movement that any demonstration of hostility on his part would have been nipped in the bud. Even when he put his hand in his pocket for his pipe, they all three—forgetting for the moment that they had taken his pistol from him—were on their feet in an instant, and had him covered with their revolvers. He threw up his hands promptly and explained his intentions, and with rather a sheepish look they sat down again. But while he could not help laughing to himself, he perceived that the odds against him were even heavier than he had taken them to be. For the first time in his life he admitted the thought that perhaps he had got into a scrape that he could not get out of.

Hardy smoked gloomily. The outlook, so far as he himself was concerned, did not greatly trouble him. He had not found life so pleasant that the near prospect of parting with it occasioned him regret. But the thought of what the loss of his life would mean to Mary filled him with a keen misery. He could see no hope for her at all. There was no one to help her. She could not help herself. He doubted even if she had a sufficient

strength of purpose to seek in death the one desperate chance of escape left open to her. Unless her husband should be shot or hung—of which, of course, there was a fairly hopeful probability—her present wretched existence might drag on for years and years. Of course, she would die of it, or be driven mad by it, at last; but what grinding agony would be hers until, in death or madness, she found her release!

Slowly the time wore away. The day was nearly ended, and little puffs of cool wind broke through the hot, dense air, and brought with them a delectable refreshment. Gradually these puffs gathered force and increased in frequency, becoming a strong, fresh breeze as the sun dropped down behind the mountains and twilight settled upon the earth. Hardy, who had eaten nothing since breakfast-time, grew desperately hungry; and his Mexican guards sniffed longingly at the relishing smells which came down to them on the wind from the many outdoor cookings going on about the town. But they showed no disposition to surrender to the cravings of the flesh. Evidently they had their orders and meant to obey them. As the twilight deepened into dusk they came closer to him.

“Only a little while longer, Señor,” Don Pedro said, cheerfully, as this change was made.

Hardy wondered what was going to happen at the end of the little while, but he did not speak. The dead silence in which they sat was broken only by the clatter of the telegraph, as from time to time a message went over the line. There was something harrowing in this sound. It made help seem so near, while in reality help was so hopelessly far away. The dispatches going

through were on Company's service—train orders and the like. Hardy listened to them idly, repeating in his mind the words as they were built up from the intermittent sounds. For a while there was silence. The room was quite dark now, save that for a little space within each doorway there shone a faint, hazy light from the stars. It must be about eight o'clock, Hardy thought; in two hours more Barwood would demand his answer. Well, he was ready to give it. The moon would be rising about that time—the last moonrise that he ever would see. It was odd to stop off short this way, right in the middle of one's life. It was like buying a through ticket to Chicago and being fired off the train at a way-station somewhere out on the plains. It didn't seem like a fair deal. Here the noise of the telegraph broke in once more upon his thoughts. An order was going through to the north-bound passenger train that would pass Santa María between three and four o'clock the following morning :

“*Side-track at Los Angelitos for the down—*” then the ticking stopped.

Hardy listened for the sound to begin again. Five minutes passed, and still the dispatch was left unfinished. Five minutes more, and only silence. At the end of fifteen minutes—the time had seemed a full hour—he drew a long breath as the truth of the situation forced itself home on him : they had cut the wires !

### VIII.

HARDY realized that his case was desperate. About all that was left for him to do, he concluded, was to die

game. He remembered once having seen a rat let out of a trap in the midst of a group of terriers. Now he knew what the feelings of the rat must have been. It was rather late in the day to be sorry for that rat, but he was sorry for it, very.

While he meditated in this dismal fashion he heard the distant sound of horses galloping. As the sound grew louder he perceived that it came from two directions; then he heard clearly the splashing of hoofs in the water as a horse crossed the river at the ford and entered the town from the north, and a few moments later a man on horseback passed close by the station, coming up the track from the south. Don Pedro rose and stretched himself.

"Glory to God!" he said, fervently. "We now can have something to eat."

But almost half an hour passed before Don Pedro was permitted to realize this piously expressed longing. Then the sound of footsteps and voices was heard, and Barwood, carrying a lantern, entered the station, followed by a couple of Mexicans. With the arrival of this relief, Don Pedro and the other two watchers were off like shots to their suppers. Barwood put down his lantern, lighted the kerosene-lamp on the table, and seated himself beside it. He was clad in full *ranchero* costume: tight-fitting trousers, girded with a red sash, and adorned with rows of silver buttons down the outside of the legs; short jacket; wide-brimmed *sombrero*; yellow boots, and great spurs. In this dress, the illusion being assisted by his dark hair and beard and black eyes, he looked so thoroughly Mexican that until he spoke Hardy did not recognize him.

"Nice rig, ain't it?" he said, with a grin. "An' it's as useful as it's pretty. For th' little game that I'm goin' t' play t'-night I don't 'specially care t' have any of my friends recognize me—an' I rather guess they won't. As a Mexican I should say that I was solid." He chuckled a little, and then went on: "My friends here don't understand English, so we can speak right out, free an' comfortable. What sort of a time have you an' Don Pedro been havin'? Did he talk matters over with you any?"

"No," Hardy answered, shortly, "he didn't."

"Well, I dun-know as 't makes much difference. I've given you th' main fac's, an' that's all you need t' make up your mind on. Have you got down t' bed-rock yet, or are you still scratchin' around in th' gravel? Times's pretty near up, you know."

"I guess I've got down to about as much bed-rock as I'm likely to get to."

"Well?"

"You can begin your shooting whenever you d—n please."

"Whoa! Steady! Now, who's been sayin' anything t' you about shootin'? That mildewed fool of a Don Pedro, I s'pose. An'—well, yes, come to think of it, I b'lieve I did kinder hint about somethin' of that sort myself. But that's only in case you won't come in, you know—an' I think you're comin' all right. Now, just you listen t' me. This afternoon I couldn't speak out as free as I wanted to. It would 'a' been takin' mos' too many chances if I'd talked out before th' up train had passed, an' while th' telegraph was workin'—you've caught on, I guess, t' th' telegraph bein' busted?"



Hardy nodded.

"Yes, I thought you had, for you're one of th' quick kind. Well, then, you see I really can talk right out t' you, for nothin' you can do now can do no hurt. You can't mend th' wires, for th' cuts are a pretty long ways off, both sides; an' if you tried t' walk off anywhere—well, if you tried t' walk off, I s'pose some of that fool talk you say Don Pedro's been givin' you about shootin' would come true. Yes, I really s'pose 't would.

"Now, maybe you've sized things up so 's t' know that just for a little thing like droppin' on you—in case we have to do it, that is—I wouldn't bother t' dress up in Mexican fashion, an' none on us would tackle such a risky game as cuttin' th' telegraph wires. An' so maybe you've got hold of th' idea that there's somethin' up that's really worth talkin' about, eh?"

Hardy had not reached any such conclusion, and Barwood's words took him by surprise. In common with most men, he regarded the taking of his life as the most important event that possibly could happen—forgetting that this is one of the cases in which the difference between the personal and impersonal standpoints marks also a difference between importance and triviality. He had regarded, therefore, the cutting of the wires, and Barwood's assumption of Mexican dress by way of disguise, as natural measures of prudence which so grave a matter as his prospective murder abundantly justified. Indeed, he had accepted the cutting of the wires as a sure sign that his murder had been irrevocably decided upon. But this presentment of the case from the standpoint of an impartial outsider, while it was sufficiently convincing and some-

what humiliating, was not enlightening. He looked puzzled.

"So you haven't tumbled to it?" Barwood went on. "Well, all I can say is, you're not quite as quick as I thought you was. Yes siree, we've got somethin' on hand for t'-night that really is worth talkin' about. It's a joy, it is. Why, man, there's two hundred thousand dollars in coined silver on th' up train t'-night, an' we mean t' have it! Now, how does that strike you?"

Hardy looked steadily at Barwood and made no answer. He was strongly disposed to believe that Barwood was lying.

"It's th' everlastin' truth," Barwood went on, perceiving the look of doubt on Hardy's face, and answering it. "It's just th' solid, everlastin' truth. We've been layin' for this haul for th' past two months—waitin' for enough of th' stuff t' come along in one lump t' make it worth while t' strike for 't. Now it's comin', an' we're goin' t' get in our work."

"How are you going about it?" Hardy asked.

"Well, we've sort of fixed things down to the Barranca Grande. I forgot, you don't know nothin' about th' Barranca Grande, or where 't is. It's a big *barranca*, six or seven kilometres down th' line. It's a hundred feet deep, I guess, in th' middle, an' there's a wooden trestle acrost it about four hundred feet long. As soon as Number Two went acrost this afternoon some of th' boys got t' work at that trestle—an' 'tain't in near as good order now as 'twas when they begun. Th' company's been promisin' an' promisin' th' Government for th' last six months they'd put in th' permanent bridge

over that *barranca*—I guess they'll go t' work an' do 't now."

"You mean that you've cut that trestle so that the passenger train will go down into the *barranca*?" Hardy's heart stopped beating as he asked this question, and even his lips became white. But he kept his voice steady, and in the dim light Barwood did not see the paleness of his face.

"In a gen'ral sort of way that's about the size of it," Barwood answered. "At first, we was just goin' t' hold up th' train an' go through th' express car. I'd rather 'a' done it that way, too. But I settled that that way would be too risky. You see, th' trouble is, I can't more 'n half trust these d——n Greasers. If th' folks on th' train tried t' stand us off, it's more 'n likely th' Greasers 'u'd just drop th' whole business an' skip out. They're curs, d——n curs, that's what Greasers is for th' mos' part. So that's why we settled t' do th' job this way. I can't say I just altogether like it, but I guess it's sure. With things all in a heap in th' bottom of th' *barranca*, an' th' cars afire, more n' likely, an' nobody much in any kind of shape for fightin'—well, I guess even Greasers can manage a job like that without gettin' skeert an' runnin' away. An' th' haul is a daisy one! Think of it! Two hundred thousand dollars at one whack! It's more'n we could make in smugglin' and stock-stealin' in ten years!"

In his excitement Barwood paced up and down the room, emphasizing his words with short jerks of his head and eager movements of his hands.

"An' now that you know the whole business, Hardy," he went on, "will you or will you not come

in? I think it's pretty d——n liberal in me t' give you th' chance; but th' fact of th' matter is I never can more 'n half trust these Greasers, an' in a job of this size I want somebody along as I know I can tie to. There'll be about twenty of us in th' job, an' that'll make ten thousand dollars apiece when we come t' divide up. Ten thousand dollars for one night's work strikes me as bein' about th' everlastin'est biggest wages I've ever knowed a man to earn. Tell me, is it a go?"

In the indignation aroused by Barwood's cool presentment of this devilish project, and in his eager desire to prevent it, Hardy had lost sight completely of his own present danger and utter helplessness. His mind was working so actively, indeed, to find a means whereby he could upset this plan for train-wrecking, robbery, and murder that he did not hear Barwood's question in conclusion, and did not reply to it. Evidently taking his silence for hesitation, Barwood continued:

"Of course, I'm bound t' tell you onct more—though sech talk ain't pleasant atween friends—that if you don't come in, things is about up with you. An' perhaps, I'd better remind you of what I was sayin' about Mary. What you see in Mary, the Lord only knows—it's more 'n I do!. But since you do see somethin' in her, I tell you again I'll chuck her into th' bargain, along with that ten thousand dollars that is waitin' for you now in th' express car that at this minute is a-comin' up th' road. Don't be bashful on my account. I'm pretty well fixed, I guess, t' get along without her. An' don't you forget that the money chance I'm givin' you ain't th' kind that comes twict in any man's life-

time—accordin' t' my experience it's mighty d——n seldom it comes onct.

“Now, I'm goin' over t' see that my Greasers have got things straight in their fool heads about what they've got to do. They're a dumb lot. The Alcalde's th' best of 'em—he's down t' th' trestle now, bossin' things—but even he's more 'n half a fool when he's sober, 'an a good deal more 'n half crazy when he's drunk. Lord! what a relief it'll be t' have you around t' help t' look after 'em!

“I'll be back in a little while, an' when I come I expect t' find you gettin' your hat on ready t' start. It's taken you sort of sudden, I see, an' that's the reason I'm not hurryin' you for an answer. But don't you forget what it is you're choosin' atween: it's havin' Mary an' ten thousand dollars, or goin' by a d——n short cut to kingdom come!”

With this valedictory Barwood departed, the two Mexicans remaining on guard just outside the door. In a moment he came back again.

“I forgot you aint had any supper,” he said. “I'll send some over t' you—you must be hungrier'n th' devil.” As he turned away he added with a grin: “An' I'll fix things so's you won't be lonely while you're eatin' it, either.”

As he passed the two Mexicans Hardy heard him say: “The Señor is composing his mind to join us. He's all right.” He added something in a lower voice, of which Hardy caught only the words “Señora” and “keep out of the way.” Then the sound of his footsteps died away as he walked toward the town. One of the Mexicans turned with a friendly nod toward

the prisoner. "The Señor is very wise to join us," he said.

## IX.

It was evident that a climax was approaching rapidly. Hardy's excitement was intense, but he did not lose his coolness. His nerves were strung to the highest pitch, but he had them absolutely under control. For the accomplishment of such a piece of work as he perceived was cut out for him this was not a bad state to be in. His mind was in admirable condition to plan, and his bodily strength to execute was increased prodigiously. The fact that his situation already was desperate, made him absolutely indifferent to danger. The thought of the tremendous responsibility that rested upon him—for he alone could prevent, if prevention were possible, this imminent wholesale murder—gave him a firm foundation of moral purpose and high resolve. Under these conditions, a strong, simple nature, such as Hardy's was, rises readily to the plane of the heroic.

Before the sound of Barwood's footsteps had quite died away he had conceived the outlines of the only practicable plan for succor that the circumstances of the case allowed. The best thing to be done, of course, was to get to the first station on the other side of the cut in the wires, and telegraph a warning to the advancing train. But this he had rejected as impossible. Supposing that he should be successful in breaking away from his guards—the first point to be gained in any event—it was clear from what Barwood had said about the work of destroying the trestle still being in

progress that he could not hope to go down the line of the railroad without being discovered. That there was a trail parallel with the railroad was probable, but he did not know where to find it ; and to try to work his way through the chaparral in the darkness—an undertaking of great difficulty, even in broad daylight—was not even worth considering. His plan, therefore, was to go up the track, away from the scene of the intended wreck, to the first station beyond the cut in the wires, and thence telegraph for assistance. This was not a sure thing, like the other ; but there was ground for strong hope that a force of men could be collected at the northern terminus and could be run down by a fast engine to the Barranca Grande in time to scatter, or possibly capture, the wreckers, and give warning to the north-bound train. The next station north, Las Palomas, was fifteen miles away. Three hours would be the shortest time in which he could make this distance on foot ; and three hours would be a perilously large amount of time to take from the six hours intervening before the arrival of the up train at the broken trestle—and he still had to make his escape from his guards.

It was strong evidence in favor of Hardy's coolness that he decided not to begin operations until he had eaten the supper that Barwood had promised to send over to him. His excitement kept him from feeling hungry, notwithstanding his long fast, but he knew that he needed the strength that food would give. A fight for life with two Mexicans, followed by a fifteen-mile dash on foot along so trying a course as a railway track, made a combination of arduous difficulties that he wisely decided had better not be assailed on an empty stomach.

In the mean time, since his only chance of getting clear of his guards lay in taking them by surprise and so mastering them, he set himself to developing with them something in the nature of friendly relations. Fortunately, Barwood's too-assured statement that the Señor was composing his mind to take part in the robbery made them quite ready to meet his amicable advances. They talked freely of the projected wreck, and with great satisfaction of their anticipated dollars. They even—thus exhibiting an amiable national characteristic—went so far as to express their sorrow for the passengers and train-hands destined to be wounded or killed. “Poor little ones! It is very sad!” they said.

While this pleasing conversation went on, Hardy was startled by hearing what seemed to be the sound of an approaching train. He raised his head and listened. One of the Mexicans noticed his motion and at the same time heard the noise. “Be not alarmed, Señor,” he said reassuringly; “it is only the little car on which the Alcalde returns.” A couple of minutes later a hand-car, with two men working the brake, appeared for a moment, as it passed through the ray of light that the lamp in the station shed across the track through the open door. The car stopped, and the men started toward the town; calling back in answer to inquiries, that the work at the trestle was completed, and that everything was all right. Hardy's heart gave a bound as he saw the hand-car; if he could get away on that he could make the run to Las Palomas inside of two hours, and the salvation of the train would be assured.

“Here comes your supper, Señor,” said one of the



men. "Ramon and I will retire. The Señor will not be disturbed at his feast." The men laughed a little, and to Hardy's surprise walked away through the darkness a considerable distance down the platform. And then, to his far greater surprise, through the doorway came Mary.

Hardy started forward. "You!" he exclaimed.

Mary's face grew red; and then, in the moment that they stood in silence, very pale.

"Will made me come," she said, speaking slowly, and with a sort of despairing solemnity. "He told me that the train was to be wrecked to-night. He told me that you had agreed to help in it if—if—oh, John, I can't——"

She swayed from side to side, and seemed about to fall. Hardy put out his arms to support her, but she steadied herself, and motioned him away with a positive fierceness. "Don't touch me," she said, "don't dare to touch! He told me, John—he dared to tell me—that you had agreed to help if—if he would give you *me!*"

There was heroic grandeur in the tone of disdain in which Mary uttered these words. But in a moment this gave place to heart-breaking sorrow and entreaty, as she added, "Oh, John! John! for God's sake tell me that he lied—or else kill me! One or the other, John, one or the other—" she broke off into a moan.

It was not difficult for Hardy to see how Barwood—permitting his hopes to mould his convictions, and being quite incapable of understanding the revolt that it would stir up in Mary's soul—had been led into this false move.

He answered her with an intense earnestness: "Mary, I swear to you before heaven that it is a most damnable lie!"

For a moment she made no reply. Then she held out her hands to him. "Forgive me, John," she said. "I ought not to have believed that it even might be true. But after—after what you said to-day, and after all that I have seen and known in these past two years—oh, you don't know—it is enough to make me lose faith in everything. Thank God, though, it isn't true. Oh, thank God for that!"

She came close to him, and seemed to gather strength as he put his arm about her. As he drew her to him, soothing her, he heard the sound of a smothered laugh in the darkness outside. Then he remembered Barwood's whispered words as he went away, and connected with them the withdrawal of the men when Mary appeared. He felt that he had an account to settle with those two Mexicans—and he hoped that he would be able to settle it very soon. Certainly, if the train was to be saved he had no time to lose.

"Mary," he said, "I want you to go into the inner room and shut the door. You won't be afraid alone in the dark in there for a little while, will you? And, Mary, suppose you—suppose you say your prayers in there. That sort of thing is not much in my line; but there's a good deal to pray for to-night, and I guess it won't do any harm."

"Yes, John," she answered. She spoke in a tone of simple obedience, as a child might have spoken. He led her to the doorway, gently pushed her inside, and closed the door after her.

She had brought a basket of food. He opened it, but he found eating hard work. He forced himself to swallow some bread and meat. Then, from a bottle of *mescal* that Barwood thoughtfully had put into the basket, he drank a good half-tumblerful at a draught. He felt the bracing effect of this potent liquor immediately. He was ready for his work.

## X.

IN one corner of the room was an iron tamping-bar belonging to the section gang. He put this within easy reach of his hand. Then he went to the door and called "Friends!" The two Mexicans came toward him.

"The Señor Barwood has sent me some *mescal*. Let us drink that all shall go well to-night."

The men grinned. He held out to the one called Ramon the bottle and to the other the glass. Ramon raised the bottle to pour; the other man held the glass carefully. This was Hardy's moment for action. In an instant the iron bar had risen like a flash and had fallen with a dull, crushing sound on Ramon's neck. He dropped like a log. The other man let the cup fall and started back, fumbling for his pistol. But before he had it free the bar had risen and had fallen again, and he, too, went down. It was not as clean a stroke as the first one. The man groaned and made an effort to rise. Hardy sprang on his breast and settled his hands tightly on his throat. For a moment he struggled convulsively; then he grew quiet. Presently his arms fell limply by his side and all his muscles relaxed. To make the mat-

ter sure, Hardy retained his grasp for a couple of minutes more. Then, drawing a long breath, he let go his hold and stood upright. He looked at Ramon. There was nothing to fear from that quarter. Ramon was lying just where he had fallen. From the ugly way in which his head was askew with his shoulders it was evident that his neck was broken. Beside him, lying unbroken and still half full, was the bottle of *mescal*.

Hardy felt faint and a little sick. He picked up the bottle of *mescal* and took another drink. This steadied him. When he had taken their pistols and cartridge-belts he dragged the two men out from the room to the platform—far enough from the doorway in the darkness to be out of range of Mary's eyes. Then he opened the door of the inner room and called to her. She was on her knees.

"You must be strong and brave, Mary," he said. "Our one chance of saving our own lives and of saving the train from being wrecked is to get to Las Palomas on the hand-car. Come."

"But how can we, John? The men won't let us go."

"The men won't bother us," he answered, grimly. "At least, not the ones left here to watch us. They are not keeping very good watch just now."

"John," she asked, in a low, horrified voice, "have you murdered them?"

"Never mind about the men," he said, speaking quickly. "Any court of justice in the land—even a Mexican court of justice—would have hung them. What we have to think about now is ourselves; or, if you don't care for yourself, think of the passengers on

that train. Come, Mary; for God's sake, come! Every second that we lose here may make us too late."

He caught her by the wrist and dragged her through the outer room, across the platform, and down to where the hand-car was standing on the track. He saw her give a shuddering glance around, and heard her sigh of relief. The skirt of her dress was touching one of the dead men as she gave this sigh, but the merciful darkness hid from her the sight that she had expected, and had so dreaded to see. Five minutes later she would not thus have been spared, for above the mountains already shone the glowing light of the rising moon.

"Remember," he whispered, "we are working to save innocent lives, which surely will be lost if we fail. Don't speak out loud. Use every bit of strength that you have. You understand how to work the car? It's like pumping; you work one end of the brake and I work the other. If you find yourself getting used up, you must sit down and rest, while I work the car alone. Now, before we start, drink this." He gave her a little *mescal*. She took it in entire obedience.

"I will try my best, John," she whispered. "I am glad that you told me to pray."

"Stand out of the way of the brake. I'm going to push the car as far as the other side of the bridge. It will make less noise. Stand steady—here we go."

They lost time this way, but the noise made by the car was very much lessened. If they could get across the bridge before their departure was discovered they would secure a fairly good start. If they could reach in safety the top of the long grade beyond the bridge—up which their progress necessarily would be slow—

they would be certain of getting safe away. From the top of the divide, as Hardy remembered, there was not a check in the down-grade to Las Palomas, and a straight track all the way. On this part of the run—if they ever got to it—Mary would not have to work at all. He alone, easily, could send the car along at a rate of nearly twenty miles an hour. Once over the divide, therefore, the rescue of the train would be assured.

“If—if anything should happen, Mary,” Hardy said as he started the car, bending over toward her, “you’ll remember that I did love you truly, won’t you? And you’ll—you’ll forgive me for my wickedness and cruelty to you this afternoon.”

“Yes, John, dear; indeed, yes. But please don’t speak to me again until it is time for me to go to work. I’m praying, John.”

As the car slowly passed down the line beyond the station platform Hardy saw the light of a lantern swinging in the hand of some one coming across from the town. The temptation to start the car rapidly down the grade was strong, but he restrained himself. Silence was more precious just then than speed. Then he suddenly realized that he had done a very stupid thing in the way that he had disposed of the bodies of the two Mexicans. All that he had thought of at the moment was hiding them from Mary. In the darkness, of course, she had not seen them; but any one going on the platform with a lantern would see them at once—to say nothing of the fact that in two or three minutes more the moon would rise. But he was a hundred yards away from the station by this time.

The lantern was advancing rapidly. There was nothing for it but to keep on.

Hardy cursed his stupidity as he doggedly pushed the car ahead of him slowly and softly. They passed the tank, looming up like some strange huge creature in the light that preceded the moonrise, and in a minute later came to the bridge. Here was the greatest danger, for, no matter how gently he pushed the car, the rumbling of the wheels sounded loudly on the perfect stillness of the night. As they left the embankment and went out on the trestle, the moon came up above the mountains with a bound, and a flood of brilliant light burst over all the land. At the same instant came from the station the sound of shouts and cries. A moment later a dozen shots were fired, as the noise of the car-wheels on the bridge told the direction in which to look for them, and the moonlight striking on Mary's gown actually showed their whereabouts. The balls went singing through the air close above their heads.

Hardy set his teeth hard as he jumped on the car and took his place at the brake. Mary grasped the other end of the bar.

"Now for it!" he said. "Go!"

Another volley of balls whistled by them and above them as the car sprang forward; and stray shots followed them until they were a quarter of a mile or so on their way up the long grade. But it was wild shooting at a moving mark, and did no harm. Mary was very white, but she was putting strength into her work—as Hardy could tell by feeling the spring of the car forward as her end of the brakes went down. His own arms swung up and down with the steadiness of the

walking-beam of a steam-engine, and with the same strength and tirelessness. Between them they drove the car up the steep incline as though they were working it along a level grade. From the varying position of the flashes as the rifles were discharged they could tell that they were followed a little way. Then the shooting stopped, and they knew that pursuit on horseback was being organized. But they were cheered by the knowledge that the first point of danger was safely passed.

Hardy knew nothing of the trails, and so could not tell whether the pursuit would be directly along the track, or would be by a short cut to head them off. In a pursuit along the track they would have a decided advantage, for horses would stand a good chance of stumbling on the cross-ties, and of breaking their own legs and their riders' necks at one or another of the many little bridges. Riding beside the track practically was impossible. The embankments rose directly from the *chaparral*, and through the cuts the way was more or less blocked by fragments of rock. Pursuit, therefore, would be slow, and would give them the further advantage that their pursuers would be clearly in sight—in which case Hardy thought that he would be able to account for two or three of them before he was overtaken. On the other hand, if a trail ran parallel with the track, as was highly probable, they were liable at any moment, until they had crossed the crest of the divide, to run into a volley of rifle-balls.

They could hear nothing but the clang of the brake as it rose and fell, and the loud rattle of the wheels. Mary stood up to her work in a way that filled Hardy



with wonder. Her face was absolutely colorless; her eyes seemed to have grown larger, and sent out a strange light; her teeth were clinched; her long golden-brown hair had broken loose from its fastenings and hung waving and shimmering around her like a glory; her light dress fluttered in the moonlight, stirred by the rapid motion and the soft, strong current of the night wind. He never before had thought of her save as one whose weakness required protection; but he saw her now putting out strength, physical and moral, almost as great as his own. When the balls went singing over them she had not quailed. In this fierce struggle of bodily endurance against time, with their lives for the stake, and the saving of lives for their reward, she was keeping even stroke with him at the brake, steadily, strongly; doing work the like of which a woman had never done before. He beheld her transformed, glorified, a superb exaltation of weakness to heroic strength. Never had he loved her as then.

As they swung along through the moonlight, in that vast solitude of night, it seemed to Hardy that they were a part of some wonderful tune—partly played by the steady beating of the brakes and the rhythmic rattle of the wheels; partly sung in the buzzing and humming that was going on inside his own brain. Mary's white face shone in the moonlight like polished marble; the moonlight danced and sparkled in her gold-brown, swaying hair; the strange light grew brighter and yet brighter in her eyes. He felt no sense of bodily effort in his work; he felt only in a vague, far-away fashion, that he had any body at all. He was strongly conscious only of the throbbing tune that he was a part of; of

the wonderful light that came from her eyes into his—and thence, sinking down into his heart, made his whole being go out to hers in a perfect ecstasy and passion of love.

## XI.

Not a volley, but a single rifle-shot—and Mary, the gleaming light fading from her eyes, loosed her hold of the brake and, clutching at her breast, fell across the car. Another shot grazed Hardy's head, and a third lightly cut the flesh of his left arm. Before a fourth was fired his own pistol cracked, and brought the engagement to an end. The attack had come from a man standing on the edge of the low cut. When the ball from Hardy's pistol struck him, he staggered for a moment and then fell forward and downward on the track. As he lay there, motionless, the moonlight struck full upon his upturned face—it was Barwood. Urged by hate and anger, he had outridden all the rest, and had headed them off at the last point where heading off was possible. The car had stopped on the crest of the divide.

Hardy stood for a moment with his pistol ready, in expectation of further assault. But none came. Then he turned to Mary, bending over her.

"You—mustn't—stop, John." Her words came very faint and brokenly. "You must—go on and—and save—the train. You *can* save it now."

Her hand still was pressed against her breast. From under where her hand rested a dark stain was spreading that looked black in the moonlight. The tones of her

voice, and the gasps with which she spoke, showed what bitter agony each word cost her.

"You must—go on," she repeated. "But wait—a minute, John. It won't be longer than that. Not longer than—that."

Hardy groaned in utter misery of soul. He took her hand. Already it was chilled. The black stain on her breast was spreading fast. In her cold hand she held his hand closely, and so looked up at him. The strange light was gone from her eyes now. In them he saw another light, stronger for the moment than the fast-gathering shadows of death, that told of a most tender and perfect love.

"Take me—with you, John. I would not like to stay here all—alone. Truly, I did love—you, John."

"Oh, my God! Oh, my darling! This is more than I can bear!" Hardy cried, brokenly.

"Kiss—me, John. And then you—*must* go on—and save them. Kiss me. Where are you, John? I can't see you—'Squire Rambo—how dark—"

As Hardy kissed her cold white forehead a shiver went over her. Her arms, for a moment half raised, fell heavily. Over the tender light that shone from her eyes a dull film came. Then all was still.

With her white dead face looking up at him; with her dead hand still clutched above the black stain on her breast; with her golden-brown hair swaying and shimmering in the moonlight, Mary lay stretched out upon the car at Hardy's feet, while he sped forward, obeying her order, to complete the rescue that now was assured.

Through that great loneliness of night, to cadenced sound that seemed to beat a requiem, with such sorrow in his heart as, by God's mercy, few men are forced to bear, this desolate lover went onward with his dead.

## THE LEGEND OF PADRE JOSÉ.

IN the beautiful city of Monterey, close beside the old Franciscan convent, there stands a single stately palm, larger and more perfect in its growth than any other palm that you will find in all the country for miles around. It grows upon an odd corner of waste land—that very likely was the convent garden a couple of hundred years or so ago—and behind it, across the broad sweep of the tree-clad valley, the blue Sierra raises its jagged crest against the bluer sky.

Instinctively you know, as you look at this beautiful palm—with its waving, feathery branches reared high toward heaven, and its deep-set roots drawing strength from the ground that the good fathers long ago made holy by their prayers—that it has a story of some sort to tell; that a meaning attaches to its presence beside the convent wall; that it came there, back in the misty past, by no mere idle chance. But among the gentlefolk of Monterey you will ask in vain for this solitary palm's story. Culture and refinement somehow are at war with the sweet traditions which modestly, along quiet ways, come down to us from times of old. And so, if you would know the story you must seek it among the humble dwellers in the town: the *cargadores*, who

carry heavy loads of other people's goods upon their shoulders; the *serenos*, who watch over the safety of the city in the still, dark hours of night; the patient *leñadores*, who bring in wood, loaded upon yet more patient *burros*, from the mountains near at hand, or other of the children of toil: for all of these, knowing not of books, and busying themselves not with the serious thoughts and concerns which vex the souls of their betters, are learned in legendary lore. In these simple, trustful minds, illuminating them with a light that brightens the dark places of weary lives, the old stories live on through the centuries; passing from lip to heart, from heart to lip, and so to heart again, yet gaining always a more mellow beauty with the passing years. Therefore, it must be among the lowly folk of Monterey that you search for the story of the stately palm; and if your search be well sped, you will hear told, in the gracious Spanish of Mexico—which is richer and softer even than is the rich, soft Spanish of Spain—this legend of the Padre José.

Padre José was not bred to the Church from his youth. He was the son of the gallant soldier Don Diego de Vargas, and his profession was that of his father—the sword. When Don Diego was ordered up into the rebellious northern country—back in the year 1692 this was, before the father of the oldest man now living was born—Don José went also. And this although the day was named for the wedding, and the Doña Ana de Oñate, most beautiful of all the maidens in the realm of New Spain, was waiting to be his bride. As all the world knows, there was hard fighting during

that campaign. For a dozen years the revolted Pueblos had stood out against their Spanish masters, and even Don Diego, with all his gallantry and with all his soldierly skill, could not in a moment conquer them. There were battles at Santa Cruz de la Cañada, at San Yldefonso, at Taos; even under the very walls of Santa Fé. But the campaign ended, and Don Diego drew his forces southward again for rest while the winter lasted, and yet the Spaniards were not conquerors. It was about the blessed Christmas season—the *noche buena*—that the sad news came down to Doña Ana, in the city of Mexico, that in one of these battles with the savages her lover had been slain. And so, no joyfulness being left to her in life, she entered the stern order of the Capuchinas. Passing into and so beyond the grave—as was that Order's wont—she to the world was dead.

Through that new year, and through great part of the next, Don Diego battled with the Pueblos; and finally, having subdued them, he came gallantly home; and, a strange thing! with him came Don José, alive and well! Being taken prisoner in the fight on the *mesa* before San Yldefonso, he had been carried off into the mountains of the Sangre de Cristo and there held for near two whole years. His was a dreary home-coming, for his promised bride was wedded to the holy Church, and so was lost to him utterly. There was no light of hope left for him in the world at all. Terrible was Don José's raging agony. At last, in his fierce despair, he cursed the holy Church for severing him from his love. But God was merciful to this sinner, and, instead of consuming him in a moment in wrathful flame, sent to him a messenger of peace. That night the blessed Saint

Francis appeared to him in a vision and told him that his dread sin would be pardoned and even, in the end, rest from his fierce sorrow would be given him, if he would devote his life to God's service in saving heathen souls. Therefore, Don José entered the Order of the Franciscans. Nor did he, as is the wont of those who enter the religious life, change his name. As José, he said, he had sinned; and as José he would work out, in deeds meet for repentance, his full forgiveness. And as José is a name most holy, and most beloved in the Church, there was none to cavil.

Because there were few heathen thereabouts, but more because he felt that he could be stronger in his faith and work if widely separated from his dead yet living love, Padre José asked to be sent out from the City of Mexico into some far corner of the land. And so it fell out that he was sent to make his home in the old Franciscan convent here in the city of Monterey. Even in the first year of his service many were the wandering souls that his love and gentleness and great compassion brought safe to shelter in the good care of God.

Yet for a long while there was only sorrow in the heart of Padre José. His good works gladdened others, but himself they made not glad; for always rose up between him and happiness the memory of his lost love. His was a gentle, clinging nature—albeit a most gallant one, as his brave deeds of arms time and again had shown—and the need for a personal love was strong within him. There was a holy comfort in his love of the good God, and in his love of working for His dear sake; but this touched only the spiritual side



of his nature, and left his human longing for something real, that he might tend and cherish, and, if need be, spend his life for, all unsatisfied. While this blank in his being remained unfilled, there was nothing to check the return of his love to the dear one who had passed from him into the bosom of the Church; of whom, even to think, as he but too well knew, was deadly sin. So his soul was wrenched and torn within him by this ever-recurring conflict between his holy duty and his human love.

Therefore it came to pass that the kind God, seeing how loyally the Padre José strove to do his duty, and how bitter hard that duty was to do, one day took pity upon him and lightened his heavy load.

Beneath the hot sun that beats down so fiercely here in the long summer time, making the air one quivering cloud of scorching heat, Padre José came slowly across the valley toward the town. He came from the little chapel of Our Lady of Guadalupe, over on the first of the foot-hills; and his heart was heavy, for few, and careless of its meaning, were the Indians who had come to his celebration of the mass. The distance from the chapel to the convent is but a mile—a trifling walk on one of the cool, crisp, October-like days which serve for winter here in Monterey. But beneath that summer sun even a strong man would have grown faint and weary—if he had not fallen outright by the way. The strength of Padre José was given so largely to the service of God that but little remained for his own needs; and so, midway in his weary walk, coming to a place where a tangle of mesquites cast a warm shadow

—that yet, in contrast with the fiery sunshine, was refreshingly cool—he thankfully cast himself down upon the ground for rest.

Close beside where he sat was a field just cleared for planting, and along the newly made *acéquia* the brown water was moving slowly, and was giving great solace to the thirsty land. It is thought by some that the large field set about with *palmas*, on the slope below the chapel of Guadalupe, is the very field beside which Padre José rested that day. Whether this be truth—as it well may be—or only a fancy, we may not know; but it surely is true that while the Padre sat there resting he saw lying in the dust of the wayside, where it had been carelessly tossed when plucked up from the ground, a little palm-tree scarce a span long—a thin, green shoot, rudely wrested from the place where it had begun its innocent, joyous life, and thus cast forth to die. At first the Padre, worn by the heat and by the sorrow of his heart, thought not at all of this poor little palm on which his eyes rested idly. And when, presently, he perceived its presence, and understood its evil plight, there came for it no compassion into his heart. He even, for a little space, felt a cruel pleasure in watching it lie shriveling there in the scorching sunshine, while he sat resting in the shade—so hard and bitter was his mood.

But such wicked feelings as these could not long find harbor in the Padre's breast. Soon a sense of great shame, and of horror at his own sinfulness, came over him; and he rose up, praying that he might be forgiven, and that he might, with God's good help, save the little palm's life. Through the blistering sunshine

—forgetful that his hood had fallen back from off his tonsured head—he carried the sorrowful little tree to the *acéquia* and plunged it into the refreshment of the slow-moving brown water, and held it there tenderly until the pitiful limpness vanished from the tiny leaves and there was something of firmness in the pale-green stem. And he felt that this mourning thing, now made joyful, was offering its thanks to him. Then, in some soft moss that he found beneath the grove of mesquites, well wet, so that a grateful dampness might be had for the rest of the hot walk, he enwrapped it lovingly, and so set off once more for the town. Not until he sat resting in his still, cool cell, the little palm, meanwhile, having been planted in the rich earth of the convent garden, and carefully shaded from the sun until its strength should come again, did Padre José realize that in lightening the troubles of this forsaken tree he had for a brief space wholly ceased to feel the weight of his own. And as he prayed there, in the shady stillness of his cell, the thought came into his heart that God, in his infinite goodness and mercy, had sent him this little palm that he might have something to love. Being yet upon his knees, he prayed from out the depths of his simple, trustful soul that this good gift might indeed be his, and that the little palm might live.

And the palm did live. From day to day, from week to week, as Padre José tended it lovingly and faithfully, praying the while for its well-being with the same trusting faith that he was wont to pray for the saving of heathen souls, it grew and flourished; and it rejoiced in the strength of its regained life with a visible gladness that was reflected into and that gladdened

his own sorrowing heart. When the weariness of his labor rested heavily upon him; when a dark despondency seized him and the thought weighed upon his soul that his work among the heathen was in vain, and that should he die no one would have been the better for his life or would be the worse for his death—then stealing in upon this darkness of sorrow would come the sweet consciousness that the palm lived, and loved him, and depended upon him. And the other, the human love that so wrenched and tormented him, and that could not, in its very nature, be cast out of his being, was tempered and chastened by this purer love. When, in the early morning, and again in the evening's dusk, he came to his palm and ministered to its wants—giving it draughts of sweet water, heaping rich earth about its roots, pruning away its too-luxuriant leaves so that its life might be concentrated and strengthened for a more vigorous growth—the memory of his early, passionate love would come back to him, but comfortingly, being purified. And as he went about his holy work by day, the thought of the little tree that loved him and that waited for his return at night, upheld and strengthened him.

The palm, for its part, repaid the care that Padre José gave it by growing as never palm grew before. Its slim stem became thick and sturdy; its gracious leaves spread out in a feathery crest, and everywhere upon it were the signs of a rich, abundant life.

So the months slipped silently away, and were lost in the depths of the passing years, and the palm shot up and became a strong, beautiful tree; and because of its existence there came to be, if not happiness, at least

a refreshing love that bred peace in the heart of Padre José. And so was fulfilled the promise that God made to him, speaking by the blessed St. Francis in the vision.

Thus more than a score of years passed on. Through all this time the Padre José gave of his strength freely in his holy work, and many heathen souls were saved which, but for his zealous labor, surely would have been lost. His palm long since had outgrown the need for his care for it, and now, in its turn, cared for him—even as his sturdy son, being come to man's estate, might have cared for him had it pleased Heaven to satisfy his human love. It was a noble tree now ; and against its foot he had made a seat, where he would come in the early morning, and again as the sun went down, for rest and comforting. And the palm, swaying a little in the evening breeze, would press its trunk against him lovingly, and soft whisperings of its thankfulness for the life that he had given it would come down to him from its rustling, feathery leaves. When he was sad, thinking of the weariness of life and of all the sorrow that there was therein, the palm-leaves rustled to him mournfully in echo of the mourning that was in his heart. Yet, imperceptibly, the tone of their murmurings would change, bringing into his heart more and more of brightness.

At other times, when the memory of his lost love on earth would come back to him and fill him with a dreary sadness, the palm would whisper of its own love and faithfulness. It would tell of its bitter sorrow as it lay in the scorching sunshine by the wayside where he found it cast out to die, and of its joy when his hands gave it water to drink and shielded it in the cool,

damp moss, and gave it, too, there in the convent garden, a safe refuge where it might rejoice in its new-found life.

Now it came to pass, at the end of many years, that a pestilence fell upon the city—a deadly fever that rose up from the earth and that caused many to die; such a fever as never before was known, and, mercifully, never since has been known here in Monterey. In every house was the shadow of death. The fathers of the convent were instant in good works among the sick; and even, that they might have more time to save the living, they forbore for a season to say masses for the dead. Only each morning and each night the towns-folk in whom was left strength to walk, came to the church of St. Francis, and there, together with the good fathers, sent up their prayers that the pestilence might be stayed.

And when the deaths grew many, and there was sore need for yet more nurses for the sick, the convent of the Capuchinas opened its doors, and the holy nuns came forth and gave their aid. (The Holy Father gave them grace and fullest absolution when, in the after-years, their prayer for pardon went to Rome.) The blessed presence and sweet gentleness of these saintly nuns brought comfort into many a stricken house in that most dreary time. But—such was the division of their work among the sick—the Franciscanos and the Capuchinas rarely met.

Faithful was Padre José in caring for the sick, and in consoling, in the name of the blessed saints, those whose sickness was even unto death. Almost his only

rest was the little space, morning and evening, when he sat beneath his palm. And being, after his many years of zealous labor, but a frail man, and going thus constantly into those places where the pestilence was at its worst, the time came when he himself felt that the fever had him in its hold; and his heart was gladdened, for he knew that now his rest would come.

Close upon the evening of the third day, feeling then that his release was near, he asked that they would carry him out beyond the convent walls into the garden, and place him in the seat beneath his palm, and leave him there.

Beautiful is the evening in Monterey. When the sun has sunk beyond the crest of the noble Mitras a great burst of red and golden glory leaps up into the sky and for a long time hangs quivering there above the mountains. Clouds of gorgeous coloring float beyond the Sierra and outline its somber, jagged ridge against their rich splendor; and through the clefts between the peaks broad rays of light shoot out across the valley, and bathe the farther mountains in a liquid flame. And even more beautiful, or, perhaps, only differently beautiful, is the time, a little after this, when the glorious magnificence has vanished from the sky, and in its place have come subdued, delicious colorings—echoes of the splendor that has passed away.

And Padre José, sitting beneath his palm, with the fever quite gone from him—for it had done its work—thanked God in his heart that this most perfect earthly beauty should be his last sight of earth. It was a fit prelude, as he whispered to the palm—his head resting,

as for years he had been wont as he sat there to rest it, against the palm's loving trunk—for the sight yet more beautiful, being heavenly, that would be his so soon. Dreamily he whispered his thankfulness for all that the palm had been to him; for all its constant tenderness and love through these long years. Then the cool evening wind, which sweeps down from the mountains at the end of the hot days and brings with it a most delectable refreshment, passed softly through the palm-leaves, and made again the old, sweet story of the palm-tree's gratitude and love. And, possessing none of the selfishness that goes with, if, indeed, it be not the very essence of all human love, the palm-tree murmured its own joyfulness that the time had come when the one whom it loved so truly would cease to be acquainted with sorrow, and would know only the perfect happiness of an endless, holy peace.

Then the Padre whispered again, or it may be that this thought was framed only in his heart, his longing to see the Doña Anna yet once more before his eyes forever closed to things of earth. And, lo! as this longing rested upon his soul, there came to the open gate of the convent garden—being led thither, surely, by God's good grace—a holy nun; and, looking on her face, the Padre José knew that for the little time of life yet left to him the love that he had lost was found!

So she sat beside him, beneath the palm, stroking his cold hand lovingly; yet with a love chastened by long suffering of love's lack, and now sanctified because it welled out anew toward one upon whom rested visibly the hand of death. Together they talked of the long



years which, in their severed lives, would have been dead years but for the life that had come to each from a living love of God ; and, as they talked, Padre José came to know that in all this dreary time she had not been afar from him, but near at hand, watching over him as an angel might have watched, and rejoicing in the fair perfection of his holy work. For she had prayed that she might be sent to where he was ; and her prayer had been granted through a firm confidence in her loyal faith to the higher love which she had professed in binding herself by her Order's holy vows.

Slowly the splendor of the sky and mountains faded into the mellow half-tints and subtle blendings of delicate colorings through which the gracious sunlight passes before it is lost in the dark depths of night. As she cherished it between her own warm hands the hand of Padre José grew yet more cold ; and she knew how little was left to him of life.

Presently, as the light grew fainter and fainter, and as the spirit of Padre José grew less and less a thing of earth, so near to heaven had it come, there sounded through the stillness of the evening air the ringing of the angelus : a low, tremulous ringing, for the ringer in the tower was worn with much toil and watching, and scarce had strength left in him to sound the call to prayer. There was a wailing melancholy, yet a deep tenderness in the faint ringing of this sweet bell, as though it mourned—yet with a great compassion, in which was hope.

And as its dying tones vibrated softly through the dusky air, there went a shivering rustle through the branches of the deserted palm, there came a thrill of

mortal agony into a lonely woman's heart—for the spirit of Padre José, leaving poor, earthly love behind it, and leaving behind it harsh earthly toil and care, had passed hence into the perfect love of heaven, into the perfect and eternal rest.



THE END.

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